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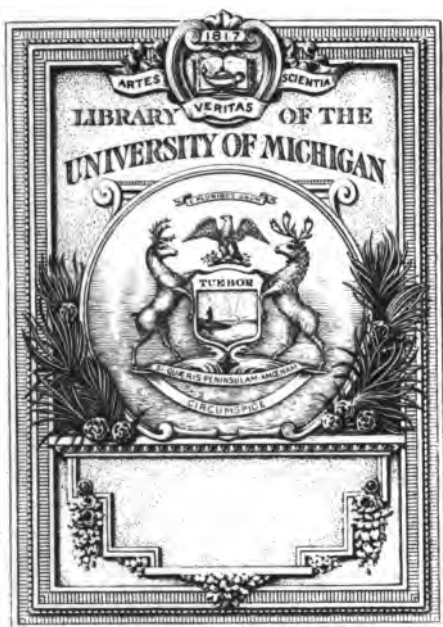
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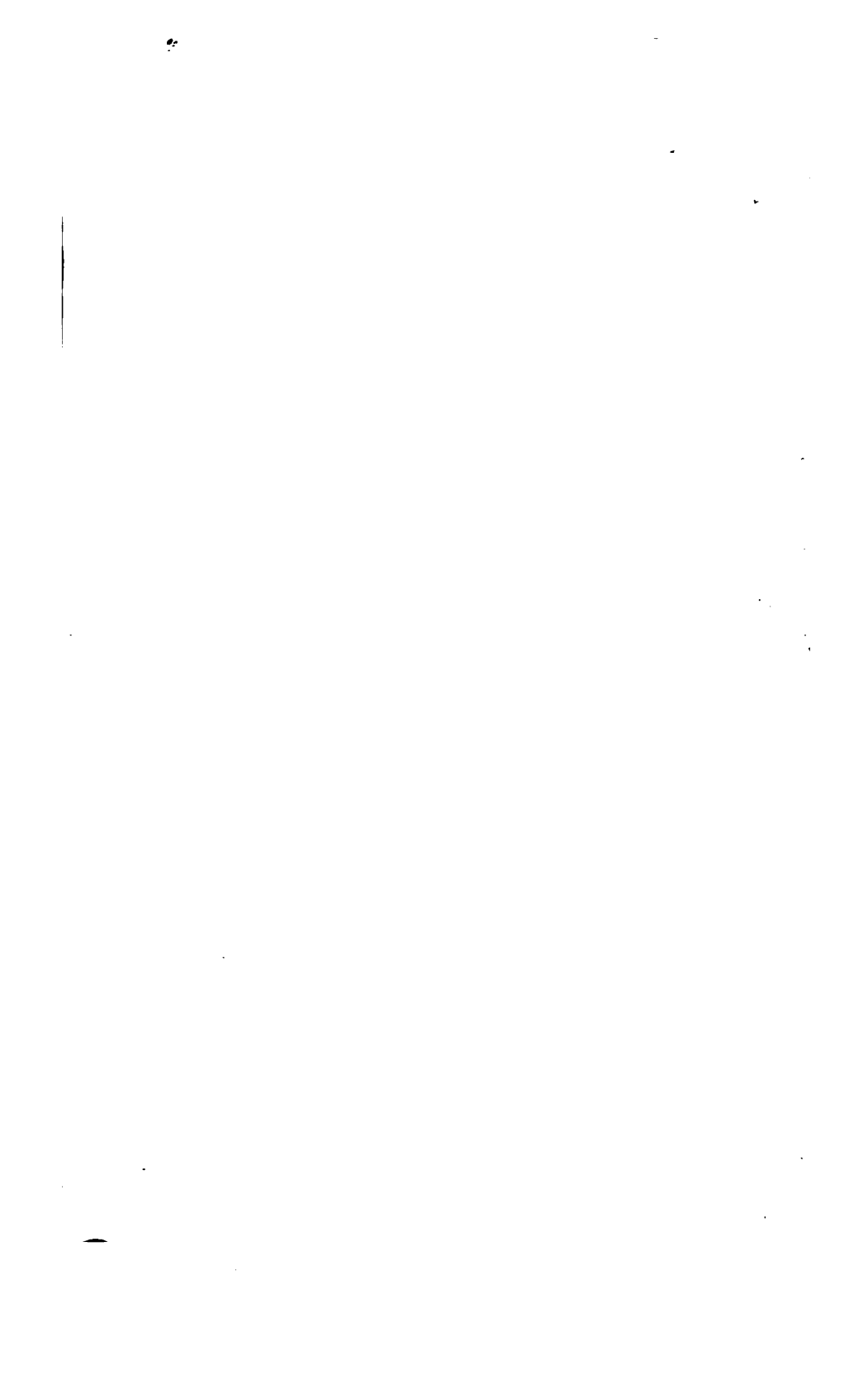
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THE
LIFE AND ADVENTURES

OF
JONATHAN JEFFERSON WHITLAW;

OR
SCENES ON THE MISSISSIPPI.

BY FRANCES ^(n. trollope) TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF "PARIS AND THE PARISIANS IN 1835,"
"TREMORDYN CLIFF," &c.



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1836.



TO THOSE

STATES OF THE AMERICAN UNION

IN WHICH SLAVERY HAS BEEN ABOLISHED,

OR NEVER PERMITTED,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

LONDON,
27th April, 1836.



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THE
LIFE AND ADVENTURES
OF
JONATHAN JEFFERSON WHITLAW:

CHAPTER I.

At one of those bold sweeps of the Mississippi river which occasionally vary the monotony of its scenery by giving to a portion of its dark, deep waters the appearance of a lake, may yet be seen the traces of what was once—some dozen years ago perhaps—a human habitation. The spot is fearfully wild, and possesses no single feature of the sweet, heart-cheering beauty which a lover of Nature would select for the embellishment of his familiar home; yet it is not altogether without interest,—that species of interest, at least, which arises from a vague and shadowy outline, and the absence of every object, either of grace or of deformity, which might lower by its insignificance the effect of the moody grandeur that seems to brood over the almost boundless plain through which the father of waters rolls his mighty waves.

There is in truth an unbroken vastness in the scenes displayed at many points of the Mississippi river that seizes very powerfully on the imagination; and though composed for the most part of objects that chill and revolt the mind, the combination of them would, I think, detain the eye for some short space from many a fairer landscape, were it possible that such could rise beside it.

Unwonted to European eyes, and mystically heavy, is the eternal gloom that seems settled upon that region. Whatever wind may blow—however bright and burning that southern sun may blaze in the unclouded sky, the stream is for ever turbid, and for ever dark, turning all that is reflected on its broad breast to its own murky hue, and so blending all things into one sad, sombre tint, till the very air seems tinged with gray, and Nature looks as if she had put on a suit of mourning to do honour to some sad solemnity. Nor can one look long upon

the scene without fancying that Nature has indeed some cause to mourn ; for at one moment an uprooted forest is seen borne along by the rapid flood, its leafy honours half concealed beneath the untransparent wave, while its faithless roots mock the air by rearing their unsightly branches in their stead. At another, the sullen stillness is interrupted by a blast that will rend from the earth her verdant mantle—there her only boast, and leave the groaning forest crushed, prostrate, unbarked and unboughed, the very emblem of ruin, desolation, and despair.

It is perhaps this very perfection of melancholy dreariness which creates the interest experienced on viewing the singular scenery of the Mississippi. But though one may feel well disposed to linger for a moment to gaze on its strange and dismal vastness, it offers little to tempt a longer stay. The drowsy alligator, luxuriating on its slimy banks, or the unsocial bear, happy in the undisputed possession of its tangled thickets, alone seem formed to find prolonged enjoyment there.

Yet this was the spot selected and chosen, at no very distant period of the earth's history, as the abode of a man who nevertheless had all the world before him where to choose ; and, what is perhaps more extraordinary still, he never either regretted his choice, or felt the slightest inclination to change his habitation for the space of at least ten years after he made it.

This chosen spot was thenceforward distinguished by the name of Mohana Creek ; an appellation borrowed from a deep ravine not a hundred yards distant from it, which during the winter and spring carried a huge stream of pine-stained water to the river.

It was indeed this valuable creek which attracted the careful and skillful eye of Jonathan Whitlaw, and finally led him to select its vicinity for the erection of a permanent dwelling for himself and his family.

What the original cause might have been which induced Mr. Jonathan Whitlaw to "squat in the bush," (as the taking possession of any heretofore unappropriated land is called in Transatlantic phrase) was never, I believe, very clearly understood ; and as the point is not likely to be one of much interest to the general reader, I will not delay the progress of my narrative by repeating the various conjectures on the subject which have reached me : it is sufficient for my purpose to state, that about three o'clock P. M. on a certain Tuesday in the month of April 18—, a very small flat boat, formed of unpainted deals, with nothing but a few articles of old household furniture for its cargo, and two women, one man, and a dog for its crew, came down the stream, and by the aid of its paddles was brought within grappling-reach of the bank immediately above Mohana Creek.

Little and light as was her lading, the boat was deep in the water, and the two women had perched themselves with their feet drawn up on an old chest, that formed the most substantial part of the cargo, in

order to keep themselves out of the water, which a very considerable leak was permitting to enter in such abundance as to render the frail craft not only very uncomfortable, but very unsafe.

"By the living Jingo," cried the man, springing on shore, "it is time to be smart, or we shall be going down where nobody never comes up. Be spry, gals!" he continued, stretching out his hand to assist the disembarkation of the females: "you hold her fast on with the hook, Portia, till I can grapple her tight to a tree; and you, Clio, look sharp and fix them notions safe and dry on shore as fast as I can pitch them at ye."

The individual who thus, in the true Columbian style, now planted his foot on the land, and thereby took possession of it, was a powerful muscular man somewhat past thirty. His features were regular, and might have been called handsome, had the expression of his countenance been less displeasing; but labour and intemperance had each left traces there.

The women who were his companions appeared both of them to be under twenty, and of the very lowest order of society. Their garments were scanty and sordid, and they had much the look and air of that poorly-paid class known in every manufacturing town in the United States as "the gals of the factory."

Whatever else they might be, however, they seemed to possess one excellent feminine quality in perfection,—they were most "obedient to command;" and though one of them was very evidently in a state which rendered her little fit for hard work, they both of them readily and actively performed the task allotted to them, till the boat was disencumbered of all the load she had carried, save the water—and that was visibly increasing upon her rapidly.

"It don't signify thinking of anything else," observed Mr. Jonathan Whittlaw, "till I have saved them elegant sawed planks. Wood is plenty enough, and to spare, no doubt; but sawing is sawing all the world over, so you must jest wait a spell, gals, till I'm ready to fix you: and if you will but bide clever a bit, and say not a word till I bid you, why then I'll set to fix you and all your notions about you outright, as slick as may be."

A goodly axe being part of the treasure landed, it required but a few minutes to demolish the frail vessel, and deposit her timbers on the beach. This done, Jonathan Whittlaw turned to his wife and his sister, nothing dismayed, as it should seem, at the apparent impossibility of leaving the dreary spot on which they stood; and having filled the hollow of his left cheek with tobacco, and settled himself in his ill-fitting attire with sundry of those jerks and tugs incomprehensible to all who have not looked at the natives of the New World face to face, he thus again addressed them:

"Well, now, this is what I call a right-down elegant location. D'ye comprehend the privilege of that handsome creek, gals? Maybe you don't, and maybe I do. Mind now what I say: if that creek don't prove as good as a dozen axes, say my name's not Jonathan."

"My!"—exclaimed the matronly Portia, drawing her thin shawl more tightly round her; for the April sun, though it had almost scorched them on the river, could not prevent the deep, dank shade of the spot from sending a cold shiver through her limbs. "Well, now, Jonathan, but that will be considerable convenient anyhow."

"I expect so," replied the man, folding his arms, and turning himself slowly round to every point of the compass to ascertain the capabilities of the spot for the "improvements" he meditated. "I expect so," he repeated with an absent air, as if his faculties were wholly absorbed by the examination he was making.

To an unpractised eye, a single glance might have seemed sufficient to discover everything that the desolate spot had to show. Before them spread the mighty mass of muddy waters; bounded, as it seemed, on all sides by the matted foliage of the level forest, above whose unvaried line sprang the high arch of heaven. Beneath their feet was a boggy, peat-like soil, that looked as if occasionally it might itself become a part of the swollen river's bed. Around them rose innumerable tall, slender trees, between whose stems the eye could not penetrate two hundred yards in any direction, so thickly was the ground covered with an undergrowth of bear-brake and reeds.

To an unpractised eye, one glance would have been enough, and too much, to show all that could there be seen; unless the next might have discovered a friendly bark upon that muddy stream, which might have borne the gazer from it for ever.

But with Jonathan Whittlaw the case was very different. Not a stem, not a stick, not a reed, not a hollow half filled with stagnant water, nor a crevice that might facilitate its escape, but was examined with as much earnest attention, and reasoned upon with as much provident wisdom as might suffice to decide the locality of a palace.

The women meanwhile again seated themselves on the chest which had done them such good service in the boat, and for a time sat silently watching the master of their destiny as he meditated in the secret council-chamber of his own breast the plans on which it hung. A low whispering then commenced between them, the result of which was a half-timid, half-coaxing attempt on the part of Clio, the bolder spirited of the two, to draw his attention from the future to the present.

"I say, Bub," she began, "I say,—do you know that Porchy and I are right down dead almost for summet to eat? I can get at the bag with the corn-cakes in no time. Shall I, Jonathan?"

Jonathan turned his quid of tobacco deliberately from one cheek to the other, and then replied,

"I'll tell you what it is, sis,—we are here—no matter why,—Perhaps 'tis because I happen to like this here part of the country best—but at any rate here we be, and I can tell you that here we must bide—but as to spending our days in nothing but eating, it's what I'm not provided for. Now look you, both of you, and I'll tell you the case at once. The nearest town to this here bit is Natchez, and I calculate that is not over nigh for a walk through the bush, seeing it can't be much less than twenty miles right a-head. I won't say that we can't buy a bushel of corn-meal no nigher, but I won't say that we can; but this I will say, that near or far, we shan't never get it at all without having the Spanish wheels ready, I expect; and concerning that commodity I'll tell you no lies,—I have got no more of it than a mouse might carry easy at full trot. But, however, there stands the meal-tub chock full, and dry as a ripe tassel,—I took care of that. And here's five gallons of whisky, and there's my axe, and here's my arms," baring them as he spoke to the shoulder. "So be good gals, and I'll fix a palace for you; but don't be for everlasting talking of eating, jest in the beginning,—I shall be wrathly enough if you do, I tell you that: so mind and say no more about it, but each of you take a drop with me, and you'll be after helping me build in no time."

With a celerity which showed the effect of habit, Jonathan Whitlaw produced a horn from his pocket, and skilfully applying it to the little cask, drew forth what he considered as a fitting portion for each, and presented it in succession to the two females. This generous and gallant office performed, he swallowed a treble dose himself, and instantly set to work.

His prophecy was speedily fulfilled—the poisonous inspiration did its work, and under its feverish influence the young women dragged and pulled, and pushed and carried, according to his orders, with a degree of strength and perseverance greatly beyond what their age and appearance promised.

The increase of vigour which he had himself acquired from the draught showed itself not only in the activity with which he laboured, but by a more than ordinary degree of loquacity—a part of which may serve to explain his future plans.

"This here tree must come down smack—and them there three small ones into the bargain; then this one, and that one, and they two t'others, shall have their heads and branches cut off slick; and there's the four corners of the house as clean as a whistle, and we must roll up the logs round them. I say, gals, don't I know the river? I expect this will prove the most profitable privilege of a wooding-station of any 'twixt New Orlines and Cincinnati. What with that there elegant

creek, and this here handsome elevation (the spot selected for his house was at this time at least six or seven inches above the level of the river); and what with them there capital hickories, and this dreadful beautiful sweep in of the river, that will bring the steamers up to me whethér they will or no;—I say, gals, that if things do but go on at New Orleans as bravely as they do now, I'll make dollars enough, by wooding their boats for 'em, to open a store for all the notions in creation at Natchez, before ten years are out. Why, since we've landed I've see half a dozen first-rate timbers shoot the creek; but I'll soon see if I can't find a way to stop 'em short, as soon as I've got a pair of hands to spare."

While his tongue was thus active, however, the hands he talked of were by no means idle. The rapidity and apparent ease with which trees were felled, and the allotted space cleared, might have been mistaken for an effort of more than mortal skill by any but a back-woodsman. What was to Jonathan Whittlaw the work of one stroke of the axe, would to any unused to the mystery have required a dozen; and where the unskilled would have raised the instrument on high, and brought its edge and weight to bear with a violent exertion of strength, he achieved the object with an easy dexterity, which seemed not to require one half the power that the brawny arm which wielded the axe could well have bestowed had it been needed.

Notwithstanding all that skill and perseverance could do, however, the sturdy woodsman and his tottering assistants were overtaken by darkness ere they had completed such a shelter as might permit them to sleep securely on the spot they had chosen.

A shed on the banks of the Mississippi, twenty miles above Natchez, may now perhaps be considered as tolerably secure, except from the occasional visits of an exploring bear, or the rambling propensities of an hungry alligator: but in the year 18— it was much less so; and as the leaden gloom of the short twilight settled upon the woods, the bold squatter was fain to suspend his labour, with no better comfort for his weary companions than a confession that, after all, they should not be able to get a spell of sleep except turn and turn about, because they might be waked by the varment, with half a leg eaten off, before they had done dreaming.

"I expect I must die then, Jonathan," said the poor young wife, in a voice so feeble as somewhat to alarm her companions,— "I expect I must die before morning."

"You a back-woodman's lady, Porchy," said her husband, approaching her, "and talk of dying the first night that you gets to the bush! Come come, gal, no faints, or my dander will be up pretty considerable. Here, Cli, shake down the straw bed upon that there lot of boughs, and give her that sack of notions for her head, and stie

will be fast and snoring in no time; and then you and I will be after kindling an elegant blaze to scare them devils the varment—bears, painters, wolves, alligators, and all."

Poor Clio promptly set about performing this new task, and with much tenderness assisted the over-worn young wife to lay herself as much at her ease as her rude couch might permit: but while thus engaged, another whisper was exchanged between the sisters, which produced exactly the same petition as the former one, some five or six hours before.

"But I say, Bob,—I expect Porchy will never sleep a wink unless you give her a morsel to eat first."

"One word for Porchy, and two for yourself, eh, Cli? Howsom-ever, you have been considerable good gals both of ye; so you shan't ax for nothing, this time."

If the hungry Clio was alert before, she now became doubly so, as she sought and found the bag containing the treasured corn-cakes.

"Well now!—wouldn't a herring grilled over a handful of sticks be first-rate?" said the poor girl coaxingly, and holding up the tempting morsel she had found, before the eyes of her brother.

"Why, I can't say but what I expect it would be eatable," replied the autocrat, producing flint and steel; "so pick up your sticks, Cli, and set about it."

With zealous activity, the now happy Clio prepared to obey the welcome mandate, and showed almost as much skill and dexterity in selecting and kindling the boughs which lay scattered round her, as her brother had done in strewing them.

In a few minutes a thick column of smoke rose through the still air, the faggots crackled, and the herring, as it hung suspended over the flame from the ingenious machine erected for it, sent forth an odour so powerful and enticing, that when it reached the nostrils of the half-famished Portia, she rose with renovated strength, and approached the manifold comforts of the blazing fire. The three weary and hungry wanderers then sat down around it, and devoured their repast with as great a degree of enjoyment as it is possible for the act of eating to bestow; and even the dog, though in general expected to provide his own meals, was not forgotten. To complete the luxury of the banquet, Jonathan dipped their one precious iron crock into the muddiest but sweetest of streams, and having boiled it, permitted the ladies, in compliance with the delicacy of their ordinary habits, to mix it, in the proportion of half and half, with the one and only liquid which he deemed worthy to enter the lips of a free-born man. In his own case, therefore, he suffered not the vital stream from his beloved whisky-kag to be contaminated by the admixture of any alloying Mississippi whatever;

and the portion he permitted himself to swallow was, as he said, in just proportion to the work he had done.

The repast ended, the weary Portia once more stretched herself upon her welcome bed of straw; while her companions were employed, first, in removing the thickly-scattered branches from the immediate neighbourhood of the fire, to guard against that most fatal of forest disasters, a conflagration amongst thick underwood, where there is no outlet for escape; and then in collecting together, at safe distance, such a quantity of them as might supply their watch-fire during the night. This done, the residue of the corn-cakes carefully tied up and slung upon a bough, and the invaluable crock as scrupulously attended to as if it had been a silver casserole, the gracious Jonathan told his yawning sister that she too might lay herself down beside his sleeping wife; adding, that when daylight came, he would wake them both, and turn in to take a spell himself.

In less than five minutes Clio was as deeply asleep as her friend Portia; and Jonathan, seated on the hearth with his dog beside him, and supporting his back against a tree, prepared to endure his weary watch, which the low long howl of wolves in the distance already showed to be no unnecessary precaution; and so strong is the instinct of self-preservation, that the united influence of labour and whisky failed to overpower the feeling which kept the aching eyes of the wanderer open through the long hours of that painful night.

However miserable beyond endurance the fatigues and privations above described may appear to the European reader, they form no exaggerated picture of that tremendous enterprise, the first "settling in the bush" on the Mississippi, at the period at which my tale commences. The undertaking is even now one both of danger and difficulty; though both are greatly lessened by the comparatively near neighbourhood that the new settler is likely to find, let him place himself at what point of the river he may, below its junction with the Ohio. Whenever a new squatter arrives, it is now the custom for about a dozen of the nearest residents to assemble at the spot he has chosen, for the purpose of assisting him to rear his log-hut; the only payment expected for this timely service being a "pretty considerable" allowance of whisky, to be socially swallowed before the party separates: so that it generally happens that the first sleep taken by the stranger in his new abode is long and sound, though perhaps not particularly refreshing.

Such is the custom of the present time; but two or three-and-twenty years ago, the stout-hearted pioneer of population on the dismal and unhealthy banks of this singular river must have perished for want of a shelter, if incapable of providing one for himself.

The laborious but very profitable employment of supplying the innu-

merable steamboats with fire-wood, which now bribes so many to brave ague and privation of all kinds, was then in the hands of very few; and none who ventured to embrace it could hope to do so without encountering at least as much of danger and difficulty as Jonathan Whitlaw.

CHAPTER II.

It is not my intention to enter upon a lengthened detail of the "get along" process of Jonathan Whitlaw in his new abode: the events I wish to dwell upon are of more recent date. It will therefore be sufficient for my purpose to state, that a spirit of industry which even intemperance could not conquer, enabled him to raise, unaided by any hands but those of his female companions, such a shelter as appeared completely to satisfy the wishes of those for whose use it was constructed. What praise could the most skilful architect desire more? Nor were their daily necessities less fully answered: Clio had often the supreme enjoyment of banqueting on a grilled herring; Portia had never yet seen the bottom of her meal-tub; and Jonathan's shanty soon came to be so well known to the flat-boat traders going down, and the steam-boat traders going up the river, that there was no need of his taking a journey to Natchez to ensure the replenishing of his whisky-cask.

He had, in truth, chosen his location well. With a species of skill and exertion peculiar to himself and his class, he contrived to abstract from his elegant Mohana Creek so many uprooted trees, that till the dry summer months stopped the supply, he had rarely occasion to sell one for the construction of the well-packed piles of wood, which it was the especial province of the strong-armed Clio to arrange upon the river's bank. To use his own language, "Natur was in partnership-like with him," and being a partner that never slept, he not unfrequently found leisure himself to take a spell in the bush with his rifle, an instrument which he used as skilfully as the axe. The result of this agreeable variety of occupation was, that Clio was almost as often employed to roast a turkey, as to grill a herring; and the table constructed of the timbers of his flat boat not unfrequently smoked with a service of game which an European board might have been proud to boast."

Meanwhile that hour, important alike in the palace or the hut—at least to the individual most concerned in it—overtook poor Portia; and on returning one evening from a "gunning frolic" in the forest,

Mr. Jonathan Whitlaw was greeted with the intelligence that he was the father of a thriving boy.

Clio, whose genius for usefulness seemed universal, performed the duties of a nurse both to mother and child as successfully as if she had studied the profession at the *Hospice de la Maternité* at Paris; and when she presented the new-born babe to her brother, she felt as much pride in the office as if conscious that she held in her arms a latent President.

Jonathan too, though not particularly susceptible of the tenderer feelings of our nature, looked on the boy with considerable satisfaction.

"That's jam, gal," said he, addressing his wife. "Boys be the right sort for the bush, mind that. Not but what Clio is up to a thing or two, too. But boys is most profitable, that's a fact. I calculate now that this youngster will be fit to turn a dollar one way or another by the time ten years is gone done; and if we can keep him from starting for five more—"

But here our hero gave so prodigious a squall, that Clio started off with him to his mother, and the remainder of the prediction was left unspoken.

However favourable it might have been, however, the years which followed gave the provident father no cause to think that his first impressions respecting his heir were in any degree too favourable. Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw, for so was the young back-woodsman named, testified innumerable qualities that might have justified the hopes of the most sanguine father in America. Spite of occasional "shaking," he was stout in limb; and considering the rather restricted nature of his position as compared to society at large, his knowledge and intelligence increased with surprising rapidity.

Never certainly did any child, even among the most precocious wonders of the European world, display a more eager desire of profiting by every opportunity of acquiring information and experience than the young Jonathan Jefferson. No steam-boat ever approached his father's station from the time he completed his third year, without finding him standing at the very extremity of the log platform that projected from the bank for the convenience of the engine-men who took their fuel there, and happy was Jonathan Jefferson when it chanced, which was not infrequently, that his keen black eyes and curly head tempted some good-humoured idler to give him a hand, that he might spring on board and gaze upon the wonders to be seen within her. These favours were requited by so knowing and fearless a nod on the part of the young explorer, that the first playful act was often followed by very active patronage as long as the operation of "wooding" lasted; and the bold boy generally returned to his sickly mother, or his much better loved aunt Clio, with nearly all his scanty garments held up in a

most firm and careful grasp, lest the biscuits, raisins, apples, and cents bestowed on him by the passengers should escape.

At the age of five, if any old acquaintance held out the accustomed hand to aid his boarding, it was thrust aside by a saucy action of the little sturdy elbow, and Jonathan Jefferson was on the deck, in the cabin, beside the engine, or in the inmost recesses of the steward's pantry, before any one knew where he came from.

It will be readily supposed that a man like Jonathan Whirlaw did not suffer the abilities of such a boy as this to remain idle. He was early given to understand that all he ate, he must earn; and as he soon manifested a family affinity to his good aunt in his love of a savoury morsel, the prudent father failed not to turn this discriminating palate to advantage, selling every shot of his own rifle for a due proportion of labour performed in building up the cords of wood, or in exploring the creek, by his active boy.

Not only one, but many dollars had the child earned or turned in some way or other, before the ten years named in his father's prediction had elapsed. Nor had the stalwart woodman gone half as far in his daring hopes for the future, formed for himself when first he stood houseless and hungry on the swampy bank which he had selected, as the result justified. No wood was so well cut and so well "sawed" as Whirlaw's; no woodsman was so ready in counting, so quick in settling, and so every way convenient for men in a hurry to deal with, as this our fortune-favoured squatter. Ague and fever seemed to keep clear of him lest they should be baffled in the strife, and turning from his close-knit iron frame, poured all their vengeance on his poor shrinking wife. But Elia, whose constitution bore a close resemblance to his own, still continued his zealous and most efficient fellow-labourer. After "shaking a spell" during the autumn of the first year or two, she too defied the foul fiend that haunts the western world in the shape of ague, and thenceforward appeared to suffer no more from the climate than the wolves and the bears, which the busy noises of their active establishment had driven back into the woods.

At the end of the third year, a cow, whose coat seemed to indicate some affinity to her neighbour bears, was added to the "plenishing of the lot;" and the omnipotent Elia contrived to sell the best milk on the river to all the yellow-tinted or woolly-headed stewards, whose interest it is to make the breakfasts, dinners, and suppers on board the steam-boats atone by their excellence for the tedious hours between. Good store of hogs, which grubbed most delicate fattening in the forest, contributed not a little to the family fund of wealth and good living; and lastly, an additional room was added to the shanty, over the door of which directly fronting the river, was inscribed with red paint in letters of a foot high—

WHITLAW'S WHISKY STORE.

The cents, fips, picciunes, bits, levys, quarters, halves, and dollars, which in the course of four years were left within this shed, very greatly exceeded the most sanguine calculations of Whitlaw; and as "Prime Bacon"—"Capital Chewing Tobacco"—"First-rate Domestic," and "Fine Meal," were successively added to the announcements, the store soon became the resort of every squatter within ten miles, as well as the favourite stopping-place of all the craft on the river.

The son and heir of this prosperous settler had just completed his tenth year, when an accident occurred to him, the consequences of which entirely changed the position and circumstances of his family.

Early in the month of August 18—, one of the noblest and largest steam-boats ever launched on the Mississippi was seen to bend gracefully round the projecting swell of the bank below Mohana Creek, and approach the landing-place in front of the store.

Young Whitlaw was occupied, at the moment she came in sight, in poking a long pole into a hole in the bank, in which he fancied he should find some "crocodile's eggs." Struck by her splendid appearance, he left his employment, and placing himself at his accustomed post on the edge of the platform, impatiently awaited her arrival.

Before the steam had been let off, or the paddles ceased to play, the impatient boy determined to spring on board, and trusting to his pole, which he fixed, as he thought, firmly on the platform, he attempted to swing himself into the vessel—a distance of at least twelve feet. So active and well practised were his young limbs, that it is probable he would have succeeded, had not the slippery log on which he had placed his pole permitted it to give way at the very moment its firmness was most essential to his safety, and the instant it sank from his hand the adventurous child fell headlong into the water.

Above two hundred persons saw the accident; and the boy's greatest danger now arose from the variety and eagerness of the measures put in practice to save him. But it appeared that the little fellow never lost his presence of mind for a moment; for, without paying the slightest attention to the contradictory cries of "Hold fast to this rope" from one quarter, and "Catch by this tub" from another, the bold boy, who swam like an otter, deliberately turned from the dangerous projection of the gallery, and marking the moment when the open gangway approached, sprang upwards, seized its railing, and in an instant stood unharmed on board the boat.

That awful peculiarity of the Mississippi river, which causes it to bear away whatever sinks beneath its surface beyond the reach and power of the most skilful search that would recover it, is so well known to every inhabitant of the region, that the sight of a human being falling into its fatal wave creates a much stronger sensation than any similar accident would do elsewhere. Young Whitlaw, therefore, was instantly surrounded by a crowd of anxious and friendly faces.

"A pretty considerable escape you've had, my boy!" exclaimed one.

"Your fate is not drowning, at any rate, you young devil," cried another.

"A famous swimmer you are, and that's a fact, boy," observed a third.

"And a bold heart as ever I see," observed a fourth.

"Are you not wet to the skin, my poor fellow?" inquired a kind-hearted gentleman, shuddering sympathetically.

"And what does it signify if I be?" replied the boy with an accent which implied more scorn than gratitude. "But, I say," he continued, fixing his eyes on a very handsome rifle which the compassionate gentleman held in his hand, "what will you sell that there rifle for?"

The offended philanthropist turned away, muttering, "Impudent young varment!" or some such phrase, while a chorus of laughter from those around testified the general feeling of admiration excited by the dauntless spirits of the saucy boy.

There was one spectator, however, who, though by no means less observant than the rest, had hitherto only looked on in silence. He remarked that the boy followed the rifle with his eyes as the indignant bearer of it walked away; and wisely judging that it was Jonathan Jefferson's innate love of barter which had dictated the question, and no idle ebullition of impertinence, as the mistaken laughers imagined, he determined to find out who it was, who at so early an age evinced such undaunted courage, a wit so ready at command, and a disposition for bargain-making which, even at a moment so agitating, did not forsake him.

The observant and judicious stranger continued to keep his eye fixed on the boy, but did not address him till the crowd which had witnessed his escape was dispersed, and then, laying a hand gently on his shoulder, he said—"What is your name, my fine fellow?"

"Jonathan Jefferson Whittlaw," replied the boy civilly: for he looked up into the inquirer's face as he addressed him, and a something, which, if it be not instinct, it would be difficult to name, whispered to him that he was rich.

"Jonathan Jefferson?" replied the stranger; "a good name that, boy,—an exceeding good name: I expect your father's no fool. Who is your father, my lad? Where do you come from?"

"My father is a first-rate capital back-woodsman, and we keeps a store; and that's Aunt Cli milking our own cow for the steward; and I sell all the skins I can snare, and I've got an axe of my own."

"Can you read, my boy?"

"No,"—responded Jonathan Jefferson in an accent somewhat humbled.

"Will you work for me, and do all that I bid you, if I take you home with me and have you taught to read?"

The cautious child did not immediately reply—and at this moment the bell was rung which gave the signal for departure.

"Off with you, my lad," cried the steward as he stepped on board with his jug of milk, "or we shall run away with you."

The boy's eyes were still fixed on the face of the person who had addressed him, as he stepped towards the edge of the boat preparatory to springing on shore, but the important question was still left unanswered.

"I shall stop here again, perhaps, coming down," said the stranger, nodding to him; "and I will come on shore and see you again, and then you shall answer me."

When the labours of that eventful day were ended, and the family were assembled round the evening meal, young Whitlaw, after a silence of several minutes, said abruptly, "Father!—why can't I read?"

The question seemed a puzzling one; for the person to whom it was addressed repeated the words twice over before he attempted to answer it.

"Why can't you read, boy?—why can't you read? Well, now, if that don't beat all natur! When did ever a body hear such a question from a brat of a chicken, and he but ten years old this very month?"

As this speech seemed to be addressed, like most of Mr. Whitlaw's speeches, to his sister Clio, it was his sister Clio who answered it.

"Well now, Bub, I'll tell you a piece of my mind: you'll find no good reason, if you look about from Georgia to Maine, why this 'ere smart chap of our'n shouldn't be President—and so I say too, why don't the boy be learnt to read?"

"The vixen's mad, as sure as the moon's in heaven!" exclaimed the master of the dwelling with much vehemence; yet something in his eye and his voice taught those whose interest it was to understand his humour, that he was neither displeased nor indifferent.

"What put that into your head, boy?" said he, turning short round towards his son, and rousing him from a reverie into which he seemed to have fallen, by raising the toe of his hob-nailed shoe so as gently to touch the boy's chin—"What put reading into your head?"

"That don't much matter, I expect," replied the young republican; "but I've got it into my head somehow, I can tell you that—and I guess that if I can't be learned here, I'll run away to where I can."

Clio again looked in her brother's face with some anxiety, not feeling quite sure whether her darling might not this time get a kick in good earnest; but she saw there was nothing to fear.

"You're a chip of the old block, I calculate, my fine one," said the

proud father, eyeing the boy from top to toe; "but I shall play another sort of game with you, from what my father was often playing with me—I'll make a gentleman off-hand of thee, boy—so no need to run."

"Father, I must begin reading to-morrow."

"Well, now, Jonathan," said the father, laughing, "my notion is that you had best wait a spell for it. Next month I shall go down to Natchez for goods; and if you'll behave yourself, and not badger me about it, I'll take you with me, and maybe leave you at some real right-down college for a few quarters."

"My——!" exclaimed the neglected Portia, whose opinion was seldom asked on any subject, "you won't leave him that far away, Jonathan, will you?"

"Your boy'll never be in Congress, Porchy, if he can't read," said Clio kindly; "so don't you put a spoke in his wheel, anyhow. But, Bub," she continued, "why for should we all bide here, if he be to take his learning at Natchez? You and I know, don't we, that you may open a store any day in a grander place than this? And I mind, when first we put foot at Mohana Creek, that you said, 'That very creek shall make dollars enough in ten years to open store at Natchez:' and isn't it ten years? and arn't the dollars made? and wouldn't it be an elegant sight to see us all set off in a steamer? and couldn't you sell the good-will for silver?"

These pithy questions followed each other with such rapidity—for the eloquence of Clio seemed to warm as she proceeded—that it was not very surprising that she received no answer to them. It was not, however, a knavish speech that slept in a foolish ear; for it suggested many thoughts which, working with those already awakened by young Jonathan's wilfulness, produced the results that will hereafter be seen.

For the present, however, all further discussion of the subject was suspended; for the voice which had hitherto been absolute beneath that roof pronounced—

"Now let us all go to bed."

And not another syllable was uttered by any of them that night.

CHAPTER III.

YOUNG as Jonathan Jefferson was at this time, he understood his father's ways and humours, and how to manage them too, better than many highly-educated youths of twice his age, who, having passed all their vacations under the paternal roof, have only arrived at the conclusion that their father was—their father, without troubling themselves to attribute to him any other characteristics whatever. Far different was the case with young Whitlaw. If he wanted a few cents with which to chaffer for some coveted article on board the next steam-boat, he watched his moment for asking for them as carefully and as skilfully as a hawk for the instant of seizing her prey. Jonathan Jefferson already loved a quid, yet he would suffer days and days to elapse without ever asking the paternal hand to share the luxury with him; but Jonathan Jefferson was seldom or never without a store of prime chewing tobacco in the pocket of his jacket, given him cheerfully and willingly by his careful father.

It was this principle of "watching his time" which sent the ambitious youth so silently and obediently to bed, in the manner recorded in the last chapter. His young mind was, however, stiffly decided upon leaving Mohana Creek one way or another before the winter set in, as Napoleon's was upon marrying an Austrian archduchess. As he laid his head on his bag of Turkey feathers, he determined not to go to sleep till he had thought a great deal about the stranger, and about Natchez, and about being a great man. But here the universal law of nature conquered the force of incipient character; and no sooner had he decided what to think of, than Jonathan Jefferson dropped asleep.

With the earliest light, however, he was beyond the reach of any human eye, seated at the foot of a maple-tree, where the prickly pear was not. The spot had no other advantage, except indeed that it was so shut in by brambles, that even Aunt Eli had never discovered the retreat, though it was one to which he constantly resorted when it was his wish and will to be idle and alone. Another boy might have chosen one of the many nooks within his reach which the wild vine embellished with its graceful and fragrant festoons; but little Jonathan Jefferson had "no such stuff in his thoughts;" he wanted a place where he could sit easy, count his levys and picciunes without being

looked at, and be very sure that nobody could find him out till he chose to let them.

Here then he sat down to meditate on the new hopes that had broken in upon him.

Had not the boy spent so many brilliant half-hours on board the steam-boats, his native shed and the dark world around it would not thus early have appeared so contemptible in his aspiring eyes; but as it was, he never left the silk curtains, gilt mouldings, gay sofas, and handsome mirrors of the cabins behind him, without wishing that he might live among them for ever, and never, never more behold the dirty dismal "get-along" style of living to which he seemed destined.

The words of the well-dressed, rich-looking stranger resounded in his ears—

"Will you work for me, if I take you home with me, and have you taught to read?"

"Work for him?" soliloquised the boy. "He can't give me harder work than father; and when I'm learning to read, I can't be working, anyhow.—Go home with him? Why, his home must be as fine as a steam-boat, to look at his beautiful hat and white shirt, and shiny boots. I'd run away and go home with him to-morrow, if 'twasn't for leaving Aunt Cli, and having no one, maybe, to give me all the nice bits at a sly time, and to praise me up everlasting for all I do."

The idea of his aunt led his thoughts into another direction.

"There's no need for me to run away to anybody, if father would give me all his money, as he ought to do. They fancy I know nothing about it; as if, because I was abed, and mother snoring t'other side, I must be asleep to. But I can lie still and peep a spell; and I've seen father and aunt haul out as many dollars upon the table as would buy me a house as fine as a cabin, and leave a lot to count over when I went to bed besides.—If I could but get at them dollars——"

Such, had his thoughts been spoken, would have been the language of the urchin as he sat scarifying the soft moss beside him with a twig that had dropped on it from the maple-tree. And then his mind wandered back again from his father, Aunt Cli, and their hoarded treasure, to the stranger, of whose offers and promises he had spoken to no one.

"And they need know nothing about it," was the well-weighed judgment to which he came at last. "We'll see what father means about Natchez; but if I tell him about the gentleman first, maybe he'll do nothing at all."

Once arrived at this conclusion, and steadfastly determined to abide by it, young Jonathan started to his feet, slipped as cautiously as an Indian through the bushes that enclosed his retreat, and walked home

to eat his breakfast, and tell his father that he had set a first-rate snare, which he was sure would trap a possum afore night.

"Arn't he a smart boy, Porchy?" said Clio, who wanted to attack her brother again, without directly addressing him. "Ten years old last Wednesday was a week, and hunting and snaring, and swimming and fending, as if he was twenty! Now won't it be a burning shame if he bean't taught to read?"

"Wait a spell, gal," said her brother somewhat sternly, "and you shall see what metal I'm made of, if you don't altogether know already. But don't bother me, or my dander will be up, I tell you, and I'll be as wrathful as an affronted alligator; and then you'll wish you'd stayed longer a-draining the drippings from Suc-cherry, maybe."

Clio did know something of his metal, and secretly determined never to allude again to the literary deficiencies of her nephew till the subject was started by the imperious back-woodsman himself. This truly wise resolution, so well deserving the attention of my female readers, was founded especially upon two points in his character with which she was well acquainted: namely, that Jonathan Whitlaw never abandoned a notion he had once taken into his head, till he had tried, and found it wanting either in feasibility or profit; and that he never promised to be in a passion without keeping his word.

It is probable that Jonathan the younger had come to something like the same conclusions; for that day passed away, and the morrow, and the day after it, without one word being uttered by either of them about Natchez, or the art of reading. The sickly, silly, lazy, languid Portia, never troubled herself to ask for more information on any subject than was proffered to her; and being on the whole pretty effectually guarded from the imperious temper of her republican husband by the ready good-nature and adroitness of his sister, she continued to "get along" as peaceably as ague, fever, and dyspepsia would let her. Poor Porchy, therefore, was not likely to break through the very diplomatic silence preserved by the other members of the household; and thus the subject which wholly occupied the minds of three out of four of the party appeared to be utterly forgotten by all.

Meanwhile other boats passed by both up and down the river, and Jonathan Jefferson's visits were continued, though in somewhat a less animated manner; for now his father generally accompanied him, and the boy felt or fancied that he was watched by him as he proceeded in his customary pursuit of forage and adventure. On one occasion, indeed, he was utterly discomfited; for Jonathan senior having entered into conversation with a passenger going down the river, he in his turn fancied he had a domestic spy near him, and, turning sharply

round, commanded Jonathan junior to clear off, and assist his aunt in measuring the wood for the engine-men.

To a command uttered in such a tone the boy well knew that prompt obedience must be shown, and accordingly he did obey; but in his secret soul he determined to give up whatever hopes of wealth and dignity the vision of "a store at Natchez" had generated in his fancy, and watching patiently for the return of the stranger, to elude his father's vigilance, put himself under the rich man's protection, and turn his back upon tyranny and Mohana Creek for ever.

The precocious lad had quite enough energy of character and decision of purpose to have executed this mental threat; and it was fortunate for the subsequent prosperity of the family that Mr. Jonathan Whitlaw had decided upon his plans before his son and heir found the opportunity of carrying into execution his own.

The day following his dismissal from the steam-boat, young Jonathan was startled by the unusual sound of a horse's feet advancing by the narrow path which the reputation of the store had of late years cleared through the forest. Only twice before had such a phenomenon appeared at Mohana Creek, and most eager was the haste and curiosity with which the whole came forth to greet it.

Clio and the boy both instantly perceived that the guest whose approach was made in so unwonted a manner, was expected by Whitlaw; but their curiosity was excited only to be baffled: no sooner had the man alighted, and fastened his beast to a tree, than that voice whose breath was the law of the Creek pronounced its mandates thus:—

"Cli! be smart—hand me the whisky demi-john and two cups—and then clear yourself off to your suds. Porchy! be after looking up the hogs, and drive 'em home. And you, Sir Peeper," he added, turning to the boy, who had ensconced himself very snugly behind the meal-tub, "you take yourself to the bush, or the devil, or where you will,—only take care I don't find your ears within reach of my fist."

The next moment saw the back-woodsman and his guest *tête-à-tête*, and each with a cup of whisky before him. The conference lasted nearly an hour, and appeared to have been amicable and satisfactory; for when they walked forth together from the shanty, the banished family, who were sitting together at very discreet distance upon one of the cords of wood, observed that the aspect and manner of both were cheerful and well satisfied; and as Whitlaw civilly held the stirrup of his guest as he mounted, they heard him say in his gentlest accents.

"Well, Major, next Wednesday then——"

"Next Wednesday then?" what a world of conjecture was created by these three words!

"Come along in," said Whitlaw to his family, as he turned from the farewell nod of his visiter and re-entered the shanty.

Jonathan junior looked into the face of Clio. She answered the appeal by giving him a wink, and laying her finger on her lips, to enforce his silence; this being, as she well knew, the only chance of their learning what was going forward from the free-born citizen. The boy understood her, and nodded in return.

"Well, now!" said the blue-lipped Porchy, who was trembling in every limb, not from cold indeed, but from the demon ague—"well, now! I thought he meant to bide for ever. Clio, do give me a drop of something warm."

They all entered the hut together, and Clio was not sorry to have something with which to make herself busy, that she might not even look as if she were curious; so that it was with even more than her usual alacrity that she prepared hot toddy to comfort her shaking sister-in-law.

But the hour was come, and Whitlaw was now as impatient to be heard as he had previously been at the idea of being questioned.

"What in the devil's name are you niggling about there, Cli?" he exclaimed, as he testily watched her operations near the fire. "I guess I want to be listened to a spell, and not have you fiddling up the chimney in that fashion."

"I'll only give this hot drop to poor Porchy, Bub, who's shaking like a rag in a hurricane; and then I'll sit down and listen to you, jam."

"What the devil do you cook water to give her for? If she shakes, give her a real drop at once, and that will give her a chance if anything will."

"I take it neat!" exclaimed the poor woman with unaffected distaste. "Oh, Jonathan! what would become of my poor head if I took it neat every time I began shaking?"

"I don't think your head would be a bit the worser, woman. Howsomer, you have got it now after your own fancy; so be still. And you Cli, sit down for a minute, without jumping up again, if you can, and I'll give you a notion of me. You need not be after hiding yourself, J. J.; for I'm minded that you shall hear me too this time, and no sly work neither."

Had not the boy known that this epithet of J. J. was a signal of especial good-humour, he might have felt somewhat uneasy at this palpable allusion to one of his peculiarities, of which he was himself thoroughly aware; but he saw that at present at least he had nothing to fear, and accordingly sat down as near to his aunt as might be, with

the very agreeable expectation of having a curiosity gratified which really for the last hour had almost kept him on the rack.

Well, now, I expect you have all of you forgot every word I said about college, and Natchez, and learning, and all that?" began the consequential orator. "It is really surprising what shortsighted creatures Godamighty has seen fit to make women! As for this young chap, I'd bet a keg to a quid, that he'd have been thinking of nothing else, from that day to this, if he'd dared; but I calculate he knows pretty considerable well that 'tis safest not to let his notions progress, when I bids 'em to stand still. So I find no fault on that score. But now, listen to me a spell, as I bid you, and you'll be able to comprehend a little what sort of a man you have got for your head."

He paused for a moment, and looked in the anxious faces before him; and a smile of indescribable self-admiration wrinkled his tough skin.

I expect you don't any of ye exactly guess what for that chap was here but now?—I calculate that there is not one of the whole kit that comprehends that I have sold my improvements, store, pig-sty, and all, for——no matter how much, Jonathan junior, I shan't name that, for all you look so sharp. It is enough for you to know, one and all, that the dollars is to be told out next Wednesday, and that the day after I shall take a spell aboard the first steamer as passes down, to look at an elegant store that I knows of seven miles this side Natchez, not on the river neither, but on a pretty lot, well improved, without a tree to be seen on it, and no more in the bush than New Orlines: and then this smart youngster here may take his schooling at Natchez, and keep a spell at home every Sunday into the bargain. Now, then, what d'ye say to me?—am I the man to manage the world, or am I not?"

"Then I'll not run away after nobody! exclaimed the boy, too much delighted with the news to be perfectly discreet; "only tell me, father, the name of the new place?"

"The lot's called Mount Etna; but it an't much of a mount either, seeing that it's jest on the water level, or near it. Howsomer, it's dreadful fine land. What shall you say, Cli, to having a nigger of our own to slave it for us?"

"My —!" exclaimed both the women at once; for the glory of possessing a negro inspired even the languid Portia. "Well, now, Jonathan, that will be jam!" added Clio, rubbing her hands with delight. "Will it be a he or a she, Jonathan?"

"A he, Cli,—a he, to begin with. Who knows what we may come to? If things goes well, I may buy a gal or two; and in time, if we progress, we may breed some young ones. Nothing pays better—'specially so near upon the canes."

"Well now, but that beats all natur, for we to have a gang of niggers of our own! Oh, Jonathan! Jonathan! how I wish that Washington Buckskin could see us then!"

"Ay, may be he'd sing to another tune, Cli. Howsomever, you're an old maid now, sis, and 'tis all the better for both of us."

There was no tendency to repining in the temper of Clio, so that she did not give above half a sigh to the memory of the too prudent lover of her youth, and the next moment was looking forward as cheerfully as if she had never known disappointment. She listened to her brother's detail of cows, and hogs, and poultry innumerable, all to be under her especial care, without thinking it possible that she could ever work too hard, and abandoned her imagination wholly to the delightful occupation of painting the joy of her eyes and the darling of her heart, her own beautiful Jonathan Jefferson, progressing with rapid strides towards the exalted rank she had ever predicted he would hold.

CHAPTER IV.

At three o'clock in the afternoon on the following Wednesday, the sound of an approaching gentle trot was again heard among the bushes behind the shanty; and immediately afterwards, the same horseman appeared in sight, and the same ceremony of evacuating the premises was performed by the three inferior members of the family, its chief receiving his guest, as before, to a private audience; the only difference being, that in addition to the demi-john and drinking-cups, a stout canvass bag was laid on the table between them.

The period of the interview, however, was now passed in a manner infinitely less tedious by those who were banished from it than the last. The spirits of all were elevated by the belief that in that very hour, while they stood and sat idly looking at each other, a goodly store of dollars were passing into the possession of their race.

"Well, now, Porchy," said the happy and triumphant Clio, "isn't our Jonathan first-rate? To think of our living so elegant and belly-full for ten years, and then, 'stead of finding that we had come to the end of everything, as so many do, to see him haul in—it don't matter how much, but such a capital lot of hard money, and that not copper neither!"

"And how much is it, Aunt Cli?" said the boy, throwing his arm coaxingly round the neck of his aunt. "I know you can tell if you'd speak. Come, now aunty, I won't be after no mischief for a week if

you'll jest tell me how many dollars father's having gived to him this minute?"

But Clio, if she knew the secret, proved herself a trustworthy confidant, for not even the cajoleries of young Jonathan could induce her to betray it.

"I wonder if I shall shake as much in the new lot?" said poor Portia, looking almost hopefully as she added, "Do you know, Cli, I do believe it be this unaccountable big river, and the bushes and the bogs, that make me so sick everlasting, 'cause I never was so afore I comed here."

The kind-hearted Clio encouraged her hopes, and recounted sundry histories which she had heard from their forest customers, of the betterfying effects of the handsome locations round Natchez.

"Tis the most splendid bluff on the river," she continued, "that's a fact; and though our lot bean't on the very tip-top of it, maybe, yet we'll have the benefit of it, sis, that's past doubting."

"And do the folks live fine there, Aunt Cli?" inquired the boy eagerly: "have they got cabins to sit in?"

"To be sure they have, my darling, as fine as New Orlines; and thee shall be the finest of 'em all, my glory,—mark my words if thee shan't."

So numerous were the questions and so agreeable the answers which arose during this conversation on the wood-stacks, that when the door of the shanty opened and the two men appeared at it, Portia's observation was.

"My ——! if they haven't done finished already!"

Short as the time appeared, however, the business of the meeting had been fully completed to the entire satisfaction of both parties; a fact of which Whitlaw's family had not the slightest doubt, though on this occasion, as on many others, his greatness showed itself by not uttering a single word, after the departure of his guest, on the subject on which he knew that his humble dependants were longing to hear him speak. But these dignified fits of silence never occurred, excepting when the Western potentate (of whom there are nearly as many as there are families in the New World) felt himself particularly well pleased with the facts he could, but would not, communicate. When it was otherwise—when some bargain had gone against him, or some enterprise had proved more difficult or less profitable than he expected, then each and every one belonging to him was sure to hear of it. Yet Whitlaw was by no means a particularly ill-tempered man: he was only a free-born tyrant.

This negative assurance, therefore, that all was right, perfectly satisfied the reasonable Clio; sent the acute heir to his maple-tree to enjoy a delightful half-hour in counting over his own hoard, and guessing

that somehow or other he would soon find a way to double it; and cheered the languid heart of Portia, as she sought a log wherewith to boil her coffee, by suggesting that her own nigger should do that job for her before long.

At an early hour on the following morning, the gallant "Lady Washington" steamer appeared in sight, coming down the river "like a queen" (a simile, by the way, much oftener made use of in the republic of America than in all the kingdoms and queendoms of Europe); and Jonathan Whitlaw, with the alacrity of a man intent on a scheme at once ambitious and prudent, sprang on board as soon as he had pocketed the price of the wood which Clio and the boy had measured out for her.

In less than three hours after, another steam-boat stopped at Whitlaw's station; and just as young Jonathan was preparing to enjoy once more an unchecked visit on board, the stranger who had distinguished him on the day he fell into the river made him a sign to return, and immediately after joined him on the bank.

The boy knew there was no time to lose, as the boat was not of large dimensions, and the quantity of wood she would require must be proportionably small; yet he would not take his visiter into the shanty, lest such allusion might be made to their former interview as would lead to inquiries and chidings, which it would be better to avoid. His mother was, as usual, hovering over the fire; and his aunt too busily engaged in measuring the wood, to do more than give him a wondering glance in passing, as he led the well-dressed stranger beyond the little clearing, and up the narrow path which traversed the forest.

"Where are you taking me, boy?" said the gentleman, stopping short, after he had taken two steps into the bush: "I don't want to explore the forest, my lad, and the boat will be off in no time. Have you asked your father about going with me? I am ready to take you, if you're ready to come, and promise to be steady and faithful, and learn smart, and do all I bid you."

"I would do all that, and more," answered the boy, "if father was going to bide here; for I don't choose to live like a bear and an alligator any longer,—and that's what they say I do, aboard the boats. But father is going to take us to a right-down elegant store above Natchez; and I'm to be larnt to read, and we're to have a black nigger of our own; and so I don't want to run away now."

"Run away!—I never asked you to run away, child. What put that frolic into your head? However, if you are going to school, that is all right; and if you are the fine boy I take you for, we may be better acquainted yet. What's the name of your father's lot, boy?—d'ye know?"

:"Mount Etna," answered young Jonathan.

"Mount Etna, is it? I know that bit well; 'tis a thriving job,—your father's up to a thing or two, I take it. There's the bell:—remember, boy, my name's Colonel Dart; and if you take your learning well, I'll make a gentleman of you."

"Father will make a gentleman of me," said the young republican stoutly; "and Aunt Cli will send me up to Congress."

"Will she?" said the stranger, laughing: "that's well; but I may be a useful friend, nevertheless. If you are at school at Natchez, I shall see you. Do not forget Colonel Dart."

So saying, the stranger walked off, and immediately re-embarked, leaving our hero rather puzzled as to why he "seemed so dreadful fond of him."

Of Colonel Dart we shall hear more hereafter; but for the present the reader must share young Whitlew's doubts concerning him. Before the circumstance of his visiting Mohana be dismissed, however, a trait of Jonathan Jefferson's ingenuity must be recorded, as it may assist in the development of his interesting character.

To any other boy of his age, the close inquiries of Cli would probably have proved exceedingly embarrassing; but he baffled them completely, and that almost by a single word.

"That's altogether new, Jonathan," said his puzzled aunt, "for you to go and take the fine folks out of the boats, and bring 'em to walk about in the bush, just to keep you company. What for did that man come to you; tell me, Jonathan, will you?"

"He came on shore, aunt, to look for some dreadful fine moss that he says grows hereabouts, to give to his mocking-bird that was sick."

"And did he find it, Jonathan?"

"No, Aunt Cli, 'cause the bell rung, and he was obliged to run back before he had done looked for it."

What the secret motive might be which led this very intelligent young citizen to conceal the visit of Colonel Dart from his indulgent aunt, who, as he very well knew, unfailingly approved of everything he did, I have never been able to ascertain. Perhaps it was the result of having watched those dignified concealments of his father, one instance of which has been recently mentioned; or it might originate solely in that instinctive fear of "getting into trouble," with which the inhabitants of the United States so often appear to be haunted. If this be so, it may unquestionably be classed as one of the kind provisions of nature, which is often found to furnish those creatures with the power of defence who are peculiarly exposed to danger: and in a country where one half of the intercourse between man and man consists in asking questions, the faculty which teaches to evade them may well be classed as a blessing.

On this occasion young Jonathan's little invention was perfectly successful; Aunt Cli asked no more questions, and the visit of Colonel Dart was entirely forgotten, except by the object of it.

Meanwhile the labours of the indefatigable Clio seemed involuntarily and almost unconsciously to relax. She felt that she was no longer at home—"It arn't our own now," was a frequent phrase, and a more frequent thought; and excepting that she continued to tend the store, and milk the cow, and cook a spell, and wash a little, Clio would have been positively idle. All the leisure, however, which this change in her habits left her, was fully occupied by listening to and answering all the questions of Portia and the boy respecting what they should find at Mount Etna. Though Clio, in truth, knew no more about the place than themselves, the habit of resorting to her at all times and seasons, whether for aid, advice, or instruction, was so strong, that had a person born and bred on the spot they were to inhabit been present with them, it is probable that every inquiry concerning it would still have been addressed to Clio.

For some days after the departure of Whitlaw the time passed pleasantly enough. They had plenty to eat, and to talk about, and not too much to do. But by degrees they began to find themselves embarrassed. Some of their articles of sale in the store were exhausted, and the steam-boats passed on without stopping, for the last cord of wood was sold. Just at this critical juncture, when they began to feel themselves almost desolate with their liberty and their idleness, the great man returned, and in a moment everything was again in a state of activity.

Two men landed with him. One of these, a young fellow under twenty, the future proprietor of Mohana Creek and all Mr. Whitlaw's improvements, was the son of the "Major" who had made the bargain; and who thought he had nobly provided for him, and a penniless girl of sixteen whom he had just married, by placing them, as he observed, "at a capital station and store, where they would be sure to take dollars, if the fever did not chance to take them:" but, at any rate, "sons what married that fashion must be provided for one way or another."

The other companion of Whitlaw appeared to await his orders, which were promptly given; and while the young bridegroom, with an air melancholy enough, stood gazing around upon the improved, but still most wretched-looking abode, they went together into the store, to which Clio was summoned to follow them, and began their business without delay.

"Hand us down all them notions on that side, Cli—and I'll set to work upon this quarter. Take care of the dry goods—don't let them domestics get rumpled up that fashion, and mind the baccy and the

candles and the whisky. Lay every notion together with its like, and mix nothing. And now, Squire Higgins, get your writing-tackle ready, and begin."

Jonathan Whillaw then began calling over all the remaining stock of his store; a complete inventory and valuation of which was made out, and signed by Squire Higgins. This operation, together with copying the whole, took about four hours; after which the three men each swallowed about half a pint of whisky, and then the two strangers departed together by the forest path.

Whitlaw's first words, after they were gone, were—"Now give me a lot of supper, Cli—and then I'll tell you what to do next."

Curiosity as well as good-will brought a plentiful meal upon the original deal-table without delay. Portia, however, sat as still and as silent as if made of wax, to which material, allowing for a slight tinge of blue, instead of red, in her complexion, she bore a strong resemblance; while Jonathan junior stood eyeing his father from as great a distance as the room permitted—for he had not yet been addressed as J. J., and thought it safest not to approach. But Clio, bold in usefulness and good-humour, after spreading forth the substantial meal in her very best manner, sat smilingly down opposite her imperious brother, and said cheerfully, "Well, Bub, and what am I to do next?"

"Drink this," answered the master of the shanty, pushing his own whisky-cup towards her,—“drink now, Cli, if you never drink again, to the good luck and prosperity of Mount Etna!”

Clio obeyed, and having swallowed about a spoonful of the noxious decoction, which unadulterated is as strange to the lips of the women as familiar to those of the men of America, she looked to her brother as if for permission, and then passed the cup to the pale Portia, and with a good-humoured nod repeated the words she was to say.

"And the boy?" said Whitlaw, looking round for him. "Where's the great scholar that is to be?—Come along, J. J., and drink the toast."

Thus encouraged, Jonathan Jefferson stood forth, and accepting the pledge, did such zealous honour to it, that even his father was fain to cry out, "Hold! enough!"

No sooner had this ceremony been duly performed, than the abdicating lord of the Creek again addressed his prime minister Clio.

"Ten years ago and a bit, Cli, and we stood first upon this 'ere very spot of ground; only there was no rafters above our heads. D'ye mind that first night, sis?—how I told you both that we could only get a spell of sleep turn and turn about? That was the first night, and this will be the last we shall ever sleep or wake at Mohana Creek.

And this last will be like that first ; for except poor Porchy there, who can't do much more waking than sleeping, and the boy, who has got the whisky in his head already, we must go to bed no more than if we expected the bears and the wolves as we did then. For 'tis by the first steamer that will pass to-morrow that I calculate upon shipping you off to Natchez. There you must bide a spell at the Eagle, till I give the word to start for Mount Etna. But as I've sold all here, I expect we must buy all there ; and if the new things pay me as well as the old, it will do. The Major was in a bit of a bustle, I guess, to locate the young ones off at once ; but that's no business of mine. Howsumever, we couldn't bargain it for the hogs,—I arn't going to make bacon out of other folks' fat, when I can have my own for the driving. So, ladies, you'll start without me and the boy. J. J. and I will drive Suc-cherry and the hogs overland to Mount Etna, as soon as we've see'd you two off ; and all the notions that you don't mean to leave behind must be done packed before sunrise—mind that."

Clio was too much accustomed to labour early and late, and to forget herself and her own comfort on all occasions, to express or to feel the least discomposure at this sudden warning.

Having first seen Portia and young Jonathan in bed, she set to work heartily, and all the notions of all the Whitlaws were done packed by sunrise ;—all the notions, at least, save one ; and the history of that one I must recount, as it demonstrates rather a sentimental trait in Clio's character.

That article of the family possessions not included in the night's packing was the original suit in which the destitute squatter had arrived at the Creek, and in which he had performed the first hard and persevering labour which had laid the foundation of the present rising state of the Whitlaw race. This suit, having been at length condemned by the wearer as incapable of further service, was by him thrown into an obscure corner of the hovel, and it was only with the morning light that Clio discovered the well-known relics.

" These shan't be left behind, nohow," she exclaimed, catching them up from the dark corner in which they reposed ; and hastening to the platform of logs on which the whole family were assembled, she seized upon a sack not fully crammed, and deposited them within it, just as the expected steamer came in sight.

Whitlaw stood beside her as she did so ; and as soon as she had completed the operation, he placed his axe, still good and true, in her hands, saying in an accent which spoke some sympathy with her feelings,

" Don't mislay nor overlook this, neither, Cli. This is the true friend that has made my fortune ; and though neither he nor I shall have need to work so hard again maybe, yet we don't choose to be parted."

The next moment the steam was idly hissing to the air, and in another the two passengers and their uncouth baggage were on board.

The sigh with which young Jonathan witnessed the departure of his aunt without him almost amounted to a sob. It was a fine thing, certainly, to know that he was going to leave the Creek behind him for ever; but to have left it in a steam-boat would have been so much finer still! One circumstance, however, almost reconciled him to the privation: this was the seeing his mother and aunt take their places among the passengers on the deck. "Then after all they won't see the cabin!" he exclaimed, "and maybe they might have expected me to bide by 'em up there."

Greatly lightened in spirit by this reflection, he turned to follow his father, and in half an hour afterward his native hut was left in the hands of its new proprietor, and my hero, followed by his father, and preceded by Suc-cherry and a score of fat hogs, leashed together like hounds, and kept in tolerably good marching order by Watch, the old partner of their emigration, took for the last time that forest path which it was the glory of his father to have made.

* * * * *

Some apology may be due to the reader for having so long detained him in a scene which has so little to excite either interest or sympathy; but the character as well as the history of my hero would have been incomplete without it. We have now to transport his family to their new dwelling; and having established them there, we shall pass more rapidly over the next few years, that we may at once bring him to a period when the business of life begins.

CHAPTER V.

THE new habitation purchased by Jonathan Whitlaw at the distance of seven miles from Natchez, though it was, as he very accurately described it, well cleared of everything resembling a tree, was nevertheless, whatever he might think of it, considerably more "in the bush" than New Orleans. To speak correctly, Mount Etna was itself not "bush," which, in the language of the country, means uncleared ground; though it was surrounded in every direction, but one, with forest as primeval as that he had left behind him at Mohana Creek.

But the clearing in that one direction did in truth make all the difference imaginable. For, in the first place, it opened upon various paths, leading to a variety of not very distant dwellings; and the prin-

cipal of these paths was a good sound corduroy road all the way to Natchez. In the next place, this near clearing was in part occupied by a settlement of some years' standing, separated from that of Whitlaw only by a few acres of forest, through which ran the boundary line of the two properties, and which contained within itself so many essential elements of good neighbourhood, that it was able more effectually to neutralize the evils usually consequent upon living in the bush than all the mere clearing in the world.

This settlement, already well known for many miles round, had been named Reichland by the German proprietor, who, about five years before, had taken possession of it as a poor man, but who was now in a very fair way of becoming a rich one.

Frederick Steinmark was the youngest of a large family of the secondary class of nobility in Bavaria. His father, himself a colonel of dragoons, had successively placed five hopeful sons to cut their way to doubtful fortune in his own profession; but Frederick, having very early charged himself with a wife, accepted the offer of his eldest brother, who had married an heiress of large landed property in Westphalia, to settle himself as the cultivator of one of the large farms acquired by his marriage, and sufficiently near the lady's baronial mansion to ensure to the strongly-attached brothers easy and constant intercourse. Frederick Steinmark was of a character so essentially exalted in itself, that whatever station he had filled must have received rather than conferred dignity by his belonging to it. As a cultivator of the ground, he was at once the most active, persevering, patient, and enterprising. His clear and commanding intellect showed itself inevitably in all he did; but its application was always regulated by a species of practical good sense, which those who did not fully comprehend his character were often surprised to find in a man whose speculations were of so lofty a nature.

For several years after the marriage of the two brothers, which took place within the same year, their vicinity was a source of the truest happiness to both; but a circumstance then occurred which, though it rather increased than lessened the mutual esteem and affection which existed between them, completely poisoned the pleasure of their daily intercourse. The baroness and her humbler sister, both presented a son to their husbands within the first year of their marriage. This formed at first a sort of tie between them, so numberless were the little circumstances interesting to the one which were infallibly interesting to the other also—but it was in fact the only one; for nature never formed two beings less calculated to assimilate than the haughty, artificial, cold-hearted baroness, Karoline von Uberkümper, and the gentle, simple, good and kind Mary Smith, whose unaffected natural graces had captivated the heart of the young Frederick Steinmark in

one of those rambles to England, which neither a slender purse, nor the necessity of devoting himself to some profession, had prevented the ardent-minded young man from making to most of the countries of Europe.

The Baron Steinmark loved and valued his charming sister-in-law as she deserved ; but not all his influence could prevent his lady from treating her as almost a servile dependant ; and nothing but the devoted love which Mary bore her husband could have enabled her to endure year after year the series of petty impertinences which the weak, but wilful-minded, baroness delighted to inflict.

Unfortunately for Mary, the high respect, perfect love, and entire esteem felt for her by her husband produced an effect respecting the intercourse between the sisters exactly the reverse of what they ought to have done. For his noble sister he had so utter and profound a contempt, that for years it never entered into his imagination that his intelligent, right-thinking wife could be other than an object of respect and deference to her.

Frederick Steinmark was absent-minded to excess ; innumerable circumstances daily passed before his eyes without his being in the least degree conscious of them ; and from the hour they married, Mary had never in any single instance called his attention—which, absent as he was, could ever be roused by her—to what was likely to give him pain.

When at length, therefore, accident chanced to open his eyes at once and for ever to the fact, that the woman he revered and loved was the object of the most insolent contempt to his brother's rich and noble, but most silly wife, his resolution was at once taken ; he decided irrevocably upon leaving his farm and the neighbourhood. The baron knew his brother too well to believe for a moment that it would be possible to shake his resolution : there had long been a sort of tacit understanding between him and Mary on the subject of the baroness ; upon every occasion on which her insolence broke out in his presence, his respect and affection appeared to be redoubled ; and though not a word was said on the subject, the keeping the unsuspecting Frederick from perceiving it became a mutual object.

It would but delay the narrative unnecessarily were I to recount the particulars of the scene which at length opened Frederick's eyes to the position which his wife held in the estimation of the haughty baroness. Her son and heir—who was moreover her only child—was an agent in it ; and had Mary wanted any reason beyond her husband's will to reconcile her to leaving her comfortable home, it would have been furnished by the fear that the baron's anger towards the boy, if often called forth in the same way, might generate a feeling between the father and son deeply injurious to the happiness of both.

One long evening's confidential conversation with his brother sufficed to decide whither Frederick and his family should betake themselves in search of a new home. The years of union which had given one son to the baron, had brought four boys and a girl to Frederick ; and the future destination of these precious boys had already become a theme of anxious speculation to him. No sooner had he decided upon leaving the protection and immediate neighbourhood of his brother, than the idea of the new world suggested itself, as offering the best hope, not only for the immediate support, but for the ultimate provision of his family. When he first named it, however, the baron vehemently opposed the project, which he declared had less of kindness and of wisdom in it than he had looked for. But the scheme had taken strong possession of Frederick's mind, and never through their lives had the elder ever found it possible to resist the forcible eloquence of the younger brother on any point upon which it had been fervently employed. So, ere they parted, the German noble, though sorely against his inclination, felt himself obliged to avow, that if he were able to persuade this enterprising brother to abandon his American project, he had no power to propose a better.

The financial arrangements were soon settled between them, for no difficulties arose but such as were generated by a struggle of liberality. It was settled that the baron should himself become the purchaser of all his brother's large stock, as well as of the furniture, and improvements of the house and premises. Beyond this, nothing could persuade Frederick to go, in accepting the urgent offers of his wealthy brother ; who, either as a gift or a loan, was most anxious to press upon him such a sum as he thought might secure him from every inconvenience in the prosecution of his enterprise. But strong as were the feelings which led to this expedition, they had not driven Frederick Steinmark to undertake a mode of life of which he was ignorant : at least all the information that books could give on the subject was familiar to him, and he well knew that the sum he could command was fully sufficient to afford every facility to a settler whose intention it was to bring up his family in habits of active industry.

In the month of March, 18—, Frederick Steinmark, his wife and five children, arrived at New Orleans ; and in less than a month afterwards they were inhabiting a large and partially cleared estate which they had purchased near Natchez. From that period, to the month of August, eight years afterwards, at which time my hero and his family became their neighbours, not a year, not a month—perhaps not a day had passed, which had not tended to improve the house and estate of Reichland ; and though no slave had ever worked for a single hour upon it, the land was held to be the best cultivated and most productive in the neighbourhood.

But notwithstanding this success, the task of settling a European family in a forest of Louisiana had not been performed without privations and annoyances of many kinds : but these chiefly fell upon Mary, and were met and conquered with a degree of quiet resolution which robbed them of half their evil power.

The situation of the Steinmark family was in truth exactly that best calculated to encounter the hazards of emigration with advantage. In addition to health of mind and body, they brought to the task, zeal, courage, industry, patience, and perseverance, together with both knowledge and money enough to spare them the necessity of enduring the first dreadful destitution of all things, which those who enter the forest with the axe alone must abide ; or the mortification, almost greater still, of bestowing labour and care in vain, because ignorantly.

When it was known at Reichland that a family of new-comers had arrived at Mount Etna, the first thought which took possession of the whole Steinmark household was—"what can we do to help them?"

"They cannot have any milk yet, mother—or, at any rate, any butter," observed Lotte Steinmark, who, at the age of eleven, was dairywoman-in-chief of Reichland : "may I send over two of my pretty pats that I churned last night? Fritz will take them for me."

"And a loaf, Lottchen, may be welcome too, I think," replied her mother : "nobody can bake in a moment. Go, Fritz—and you, Karl, go too," she continued, addressing her two eldest sons ; "take the loaf, and some of Lotte's butter, and ask if there is anything we can do to assist them."

CHAPTER VI.

THE friendly embassy from Reichland found the Whitlaw family in a state of great confusion ; but this was occasioned quite as much by their amazement at finding themselves the inhabitants of a house with four rooms besides the store, and three of them with real glass windows, as from any embarrassment caused by the absence or disorder of the ordinary comforts of existence. Those who have been well broken in to the system expressively designated "getting along," have at least this advantage over the rest of the human race : namely, that nothing which can befall them can ever put them much out of their way. In addition to this, Portia and Clio were, at the very instant the young Steinmarks entered, labouring to stretch their minds to the comprehension, that the seven chairs, four tables, three crocks, two spiders,

six plates, four cups, etc. etc. etc., which Jonathan senior and Jonathan junior were unloading from a cart at the door, were really and truly all for their own use and benefit. So that, instead of a moment of distress, it was a moment of triumph; and when Fritz, in an accent of kindness, and almost of compassion, said, addressing Whitlaw, "Can we help you, sir?" Clio burst into an irresistible chuckle of delight at this first opportunity of display, and exclaimed with one of her happiest and broadest grins, "Look here, boys!"

The two lads, however, altogether mistook her meaning; but looking in the direction she pointed, at the comfortless confusion which surrounded her, and believing that they were called upon to pity it, replied at the same moment, "It must be very bad for you, indeed; but if you will tell us what to do, we can soon help to make it better."

"Bad!" exclaimed Clio; "now that beats the union! But you look dreadful good-natured, and will give me a hand with the meal-tub anyhow, for I must be after baking a morsel to eat, I expect; and t'other, maybe, will be looking up a few sticks for me, while my man Jonathan here seasons one of them fine new spiders with a little fresh water and a good rubbing."

At this mention of bread-making, the young Karl displayed the treasures of his basket, saying, "My mother thought you would be too busy to bake directly, and so she sent me over with this."

"Does your mother keep store, my lad?" said Whitlaw, coming forward. "I was told there was no store within five miles of Mount Etna."

"I do not believe there is, sir," returned Fritz, who, suddenly recollecting that the person he was speaking to was himself about to commence storekeeper for the whole region, comprehended in an instant the sort of alarm which his voice indicated; and the laughing blue eyes of the young German exchanged a furtive glance with his brother as he added, "But though we do not keep a store, sir, we make bread; and we shall be very happy if you will accept a loaf of it, to save you the trouble of baking till you are a little settled."

"Accept the loaf," said Whitlaw, taking it in his hands and examining its texture. "Why, it's wheat, and weighs a matter of ten pounds. We shan't have no such bread for a while, maybe, to pay it back, my lad."

"Oh! we shall not want it," said the young Karl gaily; "for we are not going into a new house, you know."

"Well, that's considerable civil of them that sent you, my lads, anyhow — and we must do a turn for it, I expect, when it's wanted."

While this conversation was going on, the young Jonathan had been occupied by diving into the basket, and at length produced two half-pounds of Lotte's dainty butter, one in each hand, held with a

tight grasp by his not very delicate fingers. The German boys again looked at each other and prepared to depart.

"And is that there elegant butter a free gift too?" exclaimed the delighted Clio, receiving it on a wooden platter from her nephew's hands.

"Yes, surely," replied Fritz courteously, "if you will do my little sister the favour to accept it."

"If that don't beat all natur!" exclaimed Clio again. "Well now, I do expect that we be come among lovely clever people. What do you say to this, Porchy? — isn't it one thing to come to Mohana Creek, and another to come to Mount Etna? If we don't have an elegant coffering to-night, I expect it will be our own fault."

The good-humoured boys had at least the pleasure of perceiving that their embassy was productive of great satisfaction to the party for whose benefit it was intended; and with this report they returned home, though in the delivery of it a little propensity to smile at the oddities of the new-comers displayed itself and produced a reproof from their mother.

"I will be revenged of you for suspecting me of being inclined to laugh at 'poor hardworking country folks,' mother mine," said the saucy Fritz, "for I will be present when you first see them yourself, and I know how you will try to look grave and kind—and yet be ready to laugh too."

Fritz, however, was quite wrong. His mother felt not the least disposition to laugh when introduced to her new neighbours. It took her but a short time to understand them all very thoroughly, except the boy—and she confessed that the little Jonathan produced an unpleasant effect upon her, because his young head ever seemed to have within it more than he appeared willing to display; a peculiarity at his age which gave her, as she avowed, a sort of instinctive fear of the boy, though she knew not exactly why.

Of the other members of the family her judgment was quickly and correctly formed. She considered Whitlaw as respectable for his active and persevering industry; Portia as pitiable for the hopeless languor of ill health which constantly oppressed her; and Clio as estimable and even admirable in no common degree, from the devotion of her attachment to her family, and the rare and complete absence of every species of selfishness. The coarse breeding of the whole party was no annoyance to her whatever. The refinement of Mary Steinmark lay not on the surface; and in this, as well as in a multitude of other instances which had occurred since her residence in Louisiana, she fell without distaste into frequent and familiar intercourse with neighbours whose minds she knew could not comprehend the language of hers, and to whom therefore her mind never spoke,

except in those few sentences of universal dialect which relate to domestic usefulness and household cares. The rest was for her husband and her children : nor did she ever lament that the circle in which she was known, and valued at her worth, was not a larger one.

It was some days before Frederick Steinmark chanced to see either of his new neighbours, and it was longer still before he perceived anything about them sufficiently interesting to greatly awaken his attention. When Whitlaw first took possession of the place, his whole attention was directed to the arrangement and management of his large store; and perhaps the only affair of great and important interest to man on which Frederick Steinmark found it impossible to fix his attention was the business of a retail store. He had therefore in fact almost forgotten his new neighbour, when Whitlaw himself made a visit to Reichland, and desired to speak to "the master."

He was immediately ushered into a room exceedingly unlike any he had ever before entered ; so much so, indeed, that, contrary to his usual habits, his business was for a moment forgotten as he looked around him.

The room was large and lofty ; the walls were neither papered nor plastered, but arranged neatly enough, with smooth deal boards, laid one over the other in the manner that shipwrights call clinker-built. The floor was covered with peculiarly fine Indian matting ; and the four large windows, which opened upon a long glade of the forest, well cleared, but still retaining a few scattered groups of fine trees, were furnished with blinds of the same beautiful manufacture, but of a still finer fabric. One side of the room was covered from the floor nearly to the ceiling with books ; on another hung an admirable portrait of the Baron Steinmark ; and on a table beneath it lay sundry unintelligible objects—mathematical instruments, models of agricultural implements, and several articles belonging to a chemical apparatus which Steinmark had been using. On one side stood an electrical machine, on the other a pair of large globes ; while a variety of tables of all sorts and sizes in different parts of the room, some covered with needle-work, others with implements for drawing, some prepared for writing and some for reading, would have told a stranger more initiated into such mysteries than Whitlaw, that the room was the usual habitation of a large family accustomed to occupation.

The whole aspect of the apartment was, however, such as might very naturally surprise a back-woodsman, who fancied he was come to visit a man of his own class. Had the intruder been less intelligent, he would have been less puzzled ; but Whitlaw plainly perceived that there was present before his eye much more than had ever been dreamed of in his philosophy ; and, as before stated, a short space was occupied ere he entered upon the business which brought him

there, in looking round upon these objects, which were alike new and incomprehensible.

At length, however, he recovered the bold and pithy abruptness of his usual manner.

"I expect maybe that you arn't much of a cultivator after all; but what I comed for, neighbour, was to ask which side of the hollow that lies in the bush between your lands and mine I should run my zig-zag? But maybe you arn't competent to tell?"

"Mr. Whitlaw, I presume," said Frederick Steinmark, rising to meet him.

"The same, sir," was the reply.

"I believe, sir, I shall be able to show you where your fence should be placed," resumed the German—whose union with an English-woman had made the language of America as familiar to him as his own; and going to one of the numerous tables, he took thence a small roll, which being opened, displayed a map of the estate of Reichland; the hollow, which was in fact an important water-course, being very distinctly marked as within its boundary.

"Where my property ends, Mr. Whitlaw, I imagine that yours must begin; and therefore, as you perceive, your fence must run at the distance of one hundred yards on the western side of the 'water-course.'"

Jonathan Whitlaw knew this perfectly well before he made the present inquiry; but having, with his usual sagacity, perceived that this "hollow," as he chose to term it, might by a little ingenuity be converted into a very valuable water "privilege," he thought it was at least worth while to try if he could not persuade his neighbour either that it belonged to him, or at any rate that, being a matter of no consequence, it could make no difference whether he included it within his fence or not. He now saw that upon the question of boundary his neighbour was a match for him; but it did not follow that he must know the value of the "bit" upon which he had set his heart, and accordingly he proceeded to state his wishes, but with an air of the most perfect indifference.

"Ah, well, that rough bit don't matter much, I expect, nor a yard or two of bush neither, to such a large tract as yours—or mine either, for that matter; so if it don't make no difference to you, neighbour, I calculate that I'll run the zig-zag on this side the gap, just for the sake of two or three sugar maples that are scanty with me—but you've got bushels of 'em."

"It is plain, Mr. Whitlaw," replied the German with a good-humoured smile, "that you are a stranger here as yet, or you would not consider my water-course as so trifling a concern. In cultivating so large an estate as this with a small capital, it is necessary to do things

by degrees ; but I fully intend in about two years, when my boy will be old enough to undertake the business of a mill, to turn the drains of my plantations into that water-course, and erect a mill over it, which, if I am not deceived in the quantity of water I expect to obtain, will be able to work nine months out of twelve."

This unreserved exposure of plans and projects, in which it was by no means the custom of the country to indulge even to familiar friends, struck Whitlaw as a proof, that however ably his neighbour might have conceived the scheme (which was, in truth, exactly the same as he had himself imagined), he was nevertheless but a soft man, who could not be very difficult to manage.

When Steinmark ceased speaking, his visiter shook his head, and smiled with a look of much intelligence. " You're counting a little too fast there, master, I expect," he said, " No man as knows the country well would ever think of laying out good dollars in such a wild scheme as building a mill over that bit of a dry hollow. Howsomever, that's no business of mine, and I hope the ground will change its natur in time to accommodate your son ; but if so be as this scheme isn't to be tried for two years to come, I calculate that you won't have no objection to my having the sugar maples till such time as you sets about your mill ?"

" The sugar maples are certainly not of much consequence, being in great abundance all round us," replied Steinmark ; " but do you propose to enclose those you mention within your zig-zag ?"

" Well, then, I think I may as well—and at any rate a zig-zag is easy moved at any time," returned Jonathan Whitlaw.

There was such a fund of deep-seated genuine frankness and honour in the character of Frederick Steinmark, that it was not very easy to awaken suspicion within him ; but Whitlaw's cool assumption of his consent to enclose a valuable part of his property within his own fence was too plain an indication of his spirit to be mistaken, and it was therefore with equal promptness and decision that the master of the house replied : " No, Mr. Whitlaw, your fence must not enclose my property, but only your own, sir."

Whitlaw, as we have seen, was a shrewd, and in most things which regarded his interest, a right-judging man ; but on this occasion he had found himself at fault, and then blundered most egregiously. Accustomed, as all men must be whose lives are spent in turning everything to profit, to judge quickly and act promptly, the wile of the proprietor of Mount Etna had not been idle during the interval in which he was occupied in taking note of the singular phenomena which surrounded him on entering Frederick Steinmark's apartment. He knew little, it is true, of the use and destination of most of the objects he saw there ; but he immediately concluded that the man whose hours

were spent in occupations, of which he himself knew nothing, was likely enough to be ignorant, in his turn, of those points of human wisdom of which he knew a great deal.

"What should he know of a water privilege?" was the reflection that occurred to him, as he contemplated the various gimeracks, which to him had greatly the appearance of playthings, with which the room was filled;—"no more than a piccaninny nigger, I'll be bound for it:" and thereupon followed the short conversation that has been related.

Frederick Steinmark rose as he spoke the concluding words; and there was that in his aspect which showed Whitlaw, however little he had been accustomed to study such a one, that the conference was ended, and nothing to be hoped from the ignorance or folly of the owner of Reichland.

The feeling of vexation and resentment with which this conviction was accompanied might appear greater than the occasion could account for, were the state of Whitlaw's mind as he left the house to be fully described. That a man should inwardly swear to take vengeance against a neighbour solely because he chose to retain possession of what was his own, might be deemed unnatural—yet so it was; and neither time nor reflection ever removed from Whitlaw's mind the conviction that he was an oppressed and injured man, that Frederick Steinmark had used him ill, and that he had the right, as well as the will, to revenge himself for it at every convenient opportunity.

This schism between the heads of the two families did not, however, in any degree destroy the friendly feeling which the constant performance of kind offices on one side, and the easy acceptance of them on the other, occasioned. After a passing smile at the foolish fellow's saucy attempt to invade his property, Steinmark remembered it no more; and the only effect which the circumstance left on his feelings was, that he scarcely ever spoke of his new neighbour again.

Clio was indeed the principal link between the two houses. Her excellent qualities were fully appreciated by every individual of the Steinmark family, and in return she would at any time have walked through scorching fire or freezing water to do them service.

During the first few days of their intercourse, the four Steinmark boys made various good-natured advances to propitiate the friendship of Jonathan Jefferson; but the principle of repulsion was too strongly, though unconsciously, at work within the parties to permit anything like friendship to exist between them. The Steinmarks were all of them clever intelligent lads—so, most certainly, was Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw; but it would be more possible for a Newton to feel and to find sympathy with a being of a mind positively imbecile, than for honour, honesty, and sincerity to bind itself to wily cunning and to crafty meanness.

The dislike of the Steinmarks for young Whitlaw only demonstrated itself, however, by a cessation of those little sociabilities with which at his first arrival he was always greeted by them whenever accident brought them together. Neighbourly civility, and ever-ready cheerful good-will, whenever it was in their power to be useful, were still at the service of the whole Whitlaw family; but unless something of this sort was called for, the intercourse between them was not frequent.

On the part of young Jonathan, the feeling of dislike was both stronger and more definite: he at once feared, envied, and despised the whole family; and he could, had it been necessary or profitable, have given excellent good reasons for each and all of these feelings. As it was, however, he deemed it "wisest, discreetest, best," to say nothing about it, but to receive in peace and quietness the many little advantages which the good-nature and liberality of their neighbours afforded him.

There was nevertheless one point on which no calculations of interest appeared to interfere with the open and sincere avowal of his sentiments respecting Fritz, Karl, Hermann, and Henrich Steinmark; and this was as to the mode of their education. Jonathan Jefferson had ascertained in his first conversation with Henrich, who was nearly his own age, that neither he nor any of his brothers had ever been at school; and the profound contempt this avowal generated must have had something agreeable and soothing in its nature, for never did young Jonathan sit down after he heard it, with the intention of being particularly comfortable, without alluding to it.

Nor was the pleasant emotion produced by the mere mention of this parental neglect on the part of Frederick Steinmark the only advantage of which it was productive at Mount Etna. No sooner was the fact made known to Whitlaw, than he determined at once upon sending young Jonathan to school, though the doing so would rob him of services which the active business of the store rendered daily more important.

Neither was this the only measure which the spirit of rivalry accelerated in the Whitlaw family. Frederick Steinmark's large estate had not a single negro upon it; the labour it required was performed by himself and his boys, assisted by two German servants who had accompanied them from the Father-land. This again was a subject of unmitigated contempt and ridicule. In Louisiana, as Whitlaw remarked, nobody that was any body would ever think of getting along without a slave. It was plain that, with all their big clearings and grand house, the Steinmarks were nothing but a set of beggarly hard-working foreigners, that did not know what it was to live like gentlemen and Americans. So Jonathan Whitlaw sent his son to a school at Natchez, where he was to be taught reading, writing, ciphering,

“and the sciences,” for fifteen dollars a quarter; and moreover, he purchased two stout negroes at the first market held for the sale of such commodities in his neighbourhood.

The materials for happiness must vary according to the nature of those for whose use they are intended. There are some men to whom the acquisition of a slave would cause a feeling of shame: and there are some boys whose hearts would swell with sorrow at leaving for the first time a gentle mother's side, to become one of the jarring elements which constitute a school. But in the case of the Whitlaws, both father and son experienced feelings of the most unequivocal delight from these circumstances. Instead of feeling shame, Jonathan senior swelled with pride each time his bold triumphant eye met the fearful glance of the poor wretches he had purchased; and Jonathan junior had need of all his discretion to conceal the outward expression of the joy he felt at being within reach of daily watching the knaveries, cruelties, debaucheries, and drunkenness never absent where a slave population disgraces the soil, and which, if report say true, may be found in as great fulness of abomination at Natchez as at any point of earth afflicted with this curse.

CHAPTER VII

THE following eight years of the life of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw must be passed over very rapidly by his historian. Sometimes during this interval he was at school, but oftener constrained by his still prosperous father to take a spell of labour with him at Mount Etna.

The youth, however, learned to read, to write, and to cast up an account; and moreover, he had been discovered at the seminary by his old steam-boat acquaintance, Colonel Dart, who proved to be, as he had himself stated, a personage every way able to assist the youth in his meritorious wish of advancing his fortune.

Colonel Dart possessed the largest estate and was much the largest slave-holder in the neighbourhood of Natchez. As he was accounted a man of vast wealth, it must be presumed that his affairs were well managed, his overseers faithful and careful of his interest, and the numerous gangs of negroes who worked his plantations as well-ordered as they were profitable. But though all this might be, and perhaps was the case, it is nevertheless a certain fact, that Colonel Dart, though a bachelor and member of Congress to boot, did not always repose upon roses. Either from natural disposition, or from having some secret cause of doubt and dread upon his mind, this gentleman passed

his life in a state of gnawing anxiety which the worst flogged negro on his estate would have had no cause to envy.

Many were the schemes he had imagined by which he might obtain private and accurate knowledge of all that was going on among the negroes themselves, and also among the white overseers appointed to superintend them ; and the first idea suggested to him by the display of character he had witnessed in young Whitlaw was, that if he could get him sufficiently educated, and attach him closely to his service by gratifying his avarice and ambition, the total dependence on his favour in which it would be easy to keep the son of a squatter might prove a better guarantee for his fidelity, than any he had yet been able to put in action with the confidential clerks he had hitherto employed.

This scheme was in some degree defeated by the improved condition of the Whitlaw family ; but the idea of one day being able to convert to his own especial use and benefit the courage, activity, and spirit he had remarked in the boy, was never lost sight of by the judicious planter ; and he took care, during the time that young Jonathan passed at Natchez, to impress his observing mind with such a conviction of his wealth and generosity as to generate a most ardent desire on the part of the youth to live within the sunshine of his favour.

But for several years Jonathan senior saw more certain profit to himself in keeping his son at home than in parting with him ; and it was not till he was obliged to confess that the stripling was grown into a man, that the desired arrangement took place.

At the age of eighteen and a half, Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw was a tall handsome youth, with a quick restless eye which rarely met that of the person he conversed with—thin lips, but a set of very fine teeth within them—a slow and deliberate manner of speaking—and an air of so much self-possession and confidence, that he was supposed by all who saw him to be at least two years older than he really was.

Great as was the desire of the youth himself to become one of Colonel Dart's family, it is probable that even then his father might have made some difficulty of parting with so useful and efficient a personage, had not such an alteration taken place in his own family as rendered the absence of his son rather convenient than otherwise. Poor Portia, instead of finding her health improve by her change of residence, fell into a dropsy within a few years after their arrival at Mount Etna, which in three months put an end to her languishing existence.

Her death was certainly no great loss to any one, and Mr. Jonathan Whitlaw soon conceived hopes that it would prove to him a source of gain. One of the most constant customers at his store was a Miss Bolland Tomkins, a young lady of about thirty-five years of age, who had recently by the death of an uncle become the owner of three stout

male and two female negroes. This noble inheritance immediately attracted the attention of the neighbourhood, and more than one owner of a settlement who lacked sufficient hands to work it were meditating an attack upon the heiress's heart ; but the prompt measures of the widower baffled them all, and Miss Belinda avowed her readiness to become Mrs. Whitlaw the second, on condition that "the big son that the poor woman what was gone had left behind her should not be kept at home everlasting to trouble her."

Poor Clio heard not of this condition, or it might have broken her heart ; but it was complied with on the part of the father, and thus was Jonathan Jefferson left at liberty to accept the noble offers made him by his patron, and to become the inmate of a mansion infinitely finer than the finest steam-boat on the river.

Colonel Dart had hitherto spoken but vaguely to his young friend of the duties which it would be his special task to fulfil ; and it was not till they met at breakfast on the day following young Whitlaw's admission as an inmate at Paradise Plantation, that he began to enter upon the explanation of his wishes in a manner sufficiently clear and precise to give the confidential clerk a definite idea of what they would be.

The time was well chosen for insuring the willing obedience of the happy youth to any commands that could be laid on him. The display of Colonel Dart's breakfast-table might have bribed a spirit less pliant to follow wherever interest led than that of Jonathan Jefferson. The early and delicious spring of that southern climate had already brought a world of bright and beautiful flowers into blossom in the spacious garden upon which the breakfast-room opened. A group of luxuriant orange-trees sent their fragrance through the large windows ; and the flocks of green birds that ventured to hang upon the branches of the locust-trees, while they pecked the insects from their bark, looked like the brightest emeralds in Aladdin's enchanted garden. The whole scene indeed was one of luxury and wealth : the breakfast-table was spread with dainties, of which the most "elegant drams" made a part ; and the great man who was the envied lord of all sat opposite young Jonathan, courteously pressing him to partake the good cheer, and treating him so completely as his equal and friend, that it is not surprising if the happy youth received every word which fell from his lips as if he had been listening to the law and the prophets. It was thus the dialogue ran :—

"You find yourself more pleasant here, Jonathan, than at the wooding station, or at the store either, I guess ? I expect you would not over-well approve to go back again ?"

"No, colonel—I calculate that would not suit me in no way. I

practice, you shall find that an American citizen knows how to be grateful. And after all, Jonathan, what can I do with my money, unless it is to reward a true friend? What family have I got, Jonathan, to trouble myself about? Half-a-dozen yellow girls and their brats. They may be mine, or they may be another man's; and I'm sure I don't care a cent whether they're mine or not, provided I've the privilege of owning them: therefore you may see, my dear boy, that there's a fine opening at Paradise Plantation for a bold young fellow that would prove himself my friend."

Young Whitlaw sucked in the honied sweetness of these vague but glorious words; and raising his eyes to those of the colonel, with a more fixed and steady glance than was usual with him, he replied:

"Try me, colonel, and maybe you'll find me worth something."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE eight years which had produced such important changes in the Whitlaw family, had not passed without leaving their marks behind them over the inhabitants of Reichland.

Fritz, the eldest son, had persuaded his father, though not without difficulty, to permit his trying his fortune with a merchant in Philadelphia, in whose counting-house he had been placed with a considerable premium by his uncle. For neither time, nor the reiterated assurances of Frederick Steinmark, that money was in no way required for the prosperity of himself and his family, could prevent the baron's affection and liberality from showing themselves whenever he could find or invent an excuse for making a remittance. Karl, for the last five years, had been in possession of a well-constructed and most profitable mill, situated exactly at that point of the hollow way where the maple-trees grew which Jonathan Whitlaw had so greatly wished to enclose. Hermann was his father's right-hand, and his right-arm too, in the management of the farm; but Henrich, the pale and meditative Henrich, though only five years old when transplanted to the soil on which he grew, had still the air of an exotic. It was not that the climate disagreed with him; for though he looked delicate, and was too tall for his age, having had the full stature of a man, when he had the muscle of only seventeen years to support it, he was not in bad health, but, as his mother used to say, Henrich's imagination had never got *acclimated*. The history, the music, the literature of his own country, were the funds from which he drew all the ideas which constituted his happiness. Henrich was the only one of the family who, in reply

to the constant inquiries of the Baron Steinmark, whether he could send nothing from the Old World which might assist in making their retired abode more agreeable, had boldly answered "Yes,—books, dearest uncle, German books, and engravings of the hills and valleys of our father-land, and songs such as our peasants sing when they are dressing their vines : send me these, dear uncle, and I will pray for you,—I will pray that not even in your dreams you may change the dearly loved landscapes of your own storied land for such dark and dreary forests as those amidst which we live."

It was thus Henrich had more than once written to the Westphalian baron ; and, in return, he not only received the gifts he asked, but with them an earnest invitation to recross the ocean, and return to his protection and the land of his birth. The thought of this return caused a joy so vehement in the breast of the enthusiastic boy, that he dared not trust himself to express it ; but, placing the letter in his father's hand, he hastened to hide himself in the woods, and only reappeared when he thought he could listen to the paternal decision on the answer to be given to it, with a proper degree of external composure.

That answer very nearly killed him, for it was a negative. Frederick Steinmark could not endure to think that a child of Mary's should be exposed to the possible insolence of the baroness ; and, totally unconscious of the blow he was giving, he returned the letter into the hands of Henrich as soon as he saw him, quietly saying,

"No, Henrich, Europe is no longer the home of my family, nor can I permit that one should be severed from the rest. You would find no second mother, my boy, in the Baroness Steinmark."

The subject was alluded to no more, excepting in those occasional moments of unreserved intercourse with his sister, which formed the only charm of his present existence. Lotte sympathised with him, and this sympathy probably prevented the blow from being mortal.

And what had the eight last years done for Lotte ? They had turned a fair-haired bright-eyed little girl, into one of the loveliest nymphs that poetry ever fabled, or that nature ever formed. Her features had all the beautiful regularity of her mother's ; but her loveliness was more derived from a look that recalled the sweet and meditative countenance of her father, than from all the brightness with which youth and beauty had adorned her. There was fascination in her eye, enchantment in her smile, and, when that look of gentle thoughtfulness stole upon her face which nature had made so remarkable in that of Steinmark, there was a charm, a holiness, an intellect in her beauty, that made her, even to the accustomed eyes of her family, appear almost too fair for earth.

This being, so beyond measure lovely, so pure, so innocent, so good, so guileless,—this peerless treasure of the noble forester, un-

knowingly attracted the attention of the young Jonathan, while strolling with her brother Henrich in one of the green glades left by the taste of her father amidst their cotton-grounds.

The intercourse between the houses of Mount Etna and Reichland had nearly ceased since the second marriage of Whitlaw. The bride found nothing to attract her in the manners of her German neighbours; they owned no slaves, and wore no finery: while, on the other hand, every member of the Steinmark family thought the time better employed in attending to the various duties allotted to each, than in listening to Mrs. Whitlaw's expressions of pity at the sufferings they must endure in consequence of not "owning any niggers."

The good Clio, however, still continued to walk over to the farm, whenever she could be spared from the store, just to see how they all went on; and the kindly welcome she received from Mary and her beautiful daughter whenever she appeared, made these stolen visits become one of her best consolations in the absence of her still idolized nephew, and the presence of her indolent and very insolent sister-in-law.

If Jonathan Jefferson felt contempt for the Steinmark family before he became an inmate of Paradise Plantation, it will be readily believed that this contempt was multiplied a thousand-fold afterwards. He was in truth become a very great man, not only in his own estimation, but in that of all the slaves, and a great many of the young ladies of Natchez; and whenever it happened that he encountered either of the young Germans during his occasional visits to Mount Etna, he invariably looked at them and their rustic dresses with the most minute attention, but without betraying the least consciousness that he had ever seen them before.

It was about six months after his promotion to the honourable situation of Colonel Dart's confidential clerk, that he obtained, without being seen himself, an undisturbed stare at Lotte Steinmark. Young Jonathan was far from insensible to the influence of female beauty; and though not particularly well qualified to appreciate what was most lovely even in the personal attractions of this charming girl, he nevertheless speedily came to the conclusion that she was by far the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. He suffered the brother and sister to pass on, however, without emerging from his hiding-place, and then turned and walked slowly towards Mount Etna, pondering upon the possibility of presenting himself on the footing of a friendly visitor at a house which he had not entered for the last seven years, and before people to whom he had at every possible opportunity shown all the impertinence in his power.

It is no trifling proof of the boldness and hardihood of the youth's character, that he decided, while these disqualifying recollections

crowded upon him, not to return to Paradise Plantation till he had renewed his acquaintance with the Steinmark lads, and opened the way to an intercourse with their beautiful sister. He was willing, however, to remove some of the difficulties of the enterprise if possible; and accordingly, on entering the enlarged and beautified mansion of his father, which was now never without the dignity of sundry half-naked negro children round the door, he despatched a sable messenger into the house with orders to bring Aunt Cli to him.

Joyfully as ever, she came at his bidding.

"You wants me, my darling?" said she, wiping the hands that had been cutting cheese and bacon, on her apron. "You wants me, Jonathan dear? What can I do for thee?"

"Why, that's more than I can say, Aunt Cli," returned the enamoured youth; "but something must be done, or I shall go crazy. Do you know Lotte Steinmark since she's been grown a woman?"

"Do I know her, Jonathan? Why isn't she the dearest little soul to me, next yourself, in the whole Union?"

"Indeed!—that's jam, then. Aunt Cli, I'm in love with her; what d'ye say to that? I'm mad for love of her, and you must bring us together, if you die the minute after."

"My—!" exclaimed Clio, with a grin of the greatest delight. "If that bean't the best bit of news I've heard this many a day. Well, now, Jonathan darling, I'd rather go to your wedding with Lotte Steinmark for your bride, than see you married to the heiress of fifty niggers."

The young lover whistled Yankee Doodle.

"I had indeed, Jonathan; I'm right down sure she'd be clever to me."

"Make yourself decent, Aunt Cli," said the young man, without answering her remark, "and walk over with me to the house; move quick, d'ye hear! and say nothing to nobody."

Though a multitude of affairs must be given up the while, Clio could not refuse to comply with a request so every way agreeable, and in a few minutes she was trotting at a brisk pace after Jonathan as he strode away towards Reichland.

Ere they had gone many steps, however, the youth turned suddenly round to her, saying, "Where do the old folks keep? I've no call to see them, you know. If I bide in the orchard a spell, can't you go in, and bring the girl out to me, to take a walk for a bit, or something of that sort?"

Clio looked up wistfully in his face, and seemed loath to utter a word that should check him; but yet, somehow, she did not in her heart think she could bring out Lotte to walk with Jonathan in the orchard.

"Well, now, Jonathan dear, I expect they might think that funny-like; mightn't they? She's a shy young thing, that pretty Lotte; and maybe now you're growed such a unaccountable noble-looking man of a boy, she mightn't think it first rate decent to run after you into the orchard, Jonathan."

"That's all flum, Aunt Cli. People like them, that can't even keep a nigger to help 'em, had better not be after giving themselves airs, I can tell 'em. However, I expect you know the whole kit of them best. Which way had we better get at her?"

"Well, now, darling, I don't think we can do anything more likely than jest to walk in like, as I do by myself; and say 'How d'ye get along?' or summet of that sort, or else jest be after asking them to give or to loan you a thing or two, and then they'll be sure to be joyous to see us."

"I ask them to give or to loan ME anything! Now do jest look at them and me, Aunt Cli, and then say what they've got to loan me. That's all fudge, and jest shows their poverty-pride: I should like to let them see my home at Paradise Plantation, with five hundred niggers that all look fit to drop if I do but turn my eye upon 'em. They loan me!"

"Well, now, Jonathan, say no more about the loaning; but jest walk straight in, and see how it will be."

They had by this time nearly reached the richly-scented portico that ran round the house, and into which the general sitting-room opened. All farther discussion concerning the manner of their entrance was rendered unnecessary, for Lotte herself was standing before the open window, assisting Henrich to fasten the branches of a clematis, heavy with blossoms, upon the rustic treillis-work that surrounded the portico.

The impudence of Jonathan very nearly failed him, and he felt a pretty considerably strong inclination to run away; but the honest confidence of the simple-minded Clio came to his aid, and he manfully stood his ground beside her, as she walked up to the beautiful Lotte, who welcomed her most kindly.

Neither the brother nor sister, however, had the slightest idea who the tall stripling might be, who, dressed in the height of New Orleans elegance, stood bowing with a strange mixture of bashfulness and audacity beside her.

It was some minutes before it entered Clio's head that it was possible Lotte and Henrich should not know her nephew Jonathan; but as soon as the fact became manifest to her capacity, she performed the ceremony of introduction by saying,

"Well, now, I do believe you have downright forgotten Jonathan, both of you—and no wonder, seeing he's grow'd so dreadful hand-

some, and so tall and grandlike; but 'tis Jonathan, Lotte. Won't you shake hands with him?"

"Father and mother will be glad to see you, Clio," replied Lotte, colouring slightly, and making a movement towards the open window, "I think they are both here."

This palpable evasion of the offered courtesy of hand-shaking, seconded as it was by a brisk action of the youth's right hand the instant his aunt's agreeable proposal reached his ears, produced an effect both on his nerves and temper by no means favourable to the grace of his entry by the open window. He "had to do it," however; and following his aunt, and the beautiful object of his admiration and anger, he suddenly found himself in the presence also of Frederick Steinmark, Mary, Karl and Hermann.

The day was Sunday, and the whole family had the air of enjoying the pleasant idleness, and unbroken intercourse with each other, which it permitted. Frederick indeed was reading; but the two sons were seated on each side of the mother, and both seemed enjoying the pleasure of a very lively conversation, in which she was taking part with as much animation as either of them.

"Here is Clio, mother, come to see us," said Lotte as she entered.

"And here is our Jonathan," said Clio, stopping short in her advance towards Mary, till the young man had reached her side. "Arn't he growed, mistress?"

"Very much grown, Clio," answered Mary kindly, and turning to Jonathan she asked him to sit down with a civility which quite surprised him. He gave her credit, however, for conquering feelings and resentments respecting him, which in truth it had never entered into her heart to conceive. She had heard there was a young Whitlaw, and that young Whitlaw was gone to school, but, further than this, her memory retained no single idea concerning him.

And even this was, probably, more than Frederick Steinmark knew, or remembered about him. He raised his eyes from his book, however, and with his own sweet smile nodded a welcome to the worthy Clio.

"My nephew, Master Steinmark, sir!" said Clio, pushing Jonathan a little towards him. Frederick again raised his eyes, but it was evident that he was puzzled concerning the identity of the smart youth who stood before him, and with that guilty consciousness of inattention which absent people often betray, he looked towards his wife and sons to assist him out of his embarrassment, or, if that were impossible, at least to relieve him from doing the honours of his house to a guest of whose existence he could not recal the slightest recollection. Confident, however, from old experience, of receiving the aid his ex-

pressive look demanded, he resumed his occupation, and, impossible as the thing appeared to Jonathan Jefferson, totally forgot that he was in the room.

Not so Karl, Hermann, or Henrich. The occasional impertinences of their visitor to themselves were certainly not wholly forgotten ; but his presence recalled ideas infinitely more disagreeable, and more disadvantageous to him, than any remembrances connected merely with themselves.

Though the young Steinmarks associated as little as was well possible with the inhabitants of Natchez, the necessary sale of their produce, and the purchase of articles required in return, made it impossible that they should be altogether strangers there. Karl, too, in his vocation of miller, often found himself under the necessity of hearing more plantation gossip than was either interesting or agreeable ; and both from his customers, and from the general report of Natchez, such a series of anecdotes had reached the brothers, as proved that, either justly or unjustly, the young hero of my tale had already acquired as general a character for dissolute libertinism as it would have required at least twice his age to collect round any one name amidst the more slowly developed vices of Europe.

Nor was this all. The charge of cruelty to the unhappy negroes, into whose secret thoughts he was commissioned to penetrate, and whose slightest failings it was his hired service to betray, was spoken of with loathing and abhorrence even at Natchez. The hearts of the young Germans seemed to burn within them as Jonathan prepared to seat himself in the circle that pressed round their mother ; and when, drawing his chair near to that of Lotte, he began smilingly and familiarly to address her, no consideration of civility, nor even the accustomed deference to the presence of his parents, could control the feelings of the impetuous Karl, who, approaching his sister abruptly, said in a half-whisper, " Leave the room, Lottchen ! " and then, having stood between her and the object of his indignation till the door closed behind her, he replaced himself close beside his mother, turning his clear and almost fierce blue eyes upon the guest, with a look from which even the accomplished effrontery of Jonathan Jefferson turned abashed.

This scene, which was becoming extremely unpleasant to every person present, excepting the absorbed Frederick Steinmark and the unsuspecting Clio, could not last long. The object which had induced young Whitlaw to such an act of condescension as paying a voluntary visit to the " German boors," as he not very aptly termed the family of Steinmark, having so strangely withdrawn herself, all wish on his part to prolong the visit vanished ; and rising from his chair with his hat still on his head, and his arms folded on his breast, he stood wait-

ting with no very amiable feelings, till his aunt should give some indication that if he bolted through the window, she would follow him.

Clio, however, who perceived not that any thing was amiss, save indeed the absence of Lotte, whom she every moment expected to see re-enter, was in no hurry to depart. She hailed this opportunity of exhibiting the beauty and splendour of her nephew to her friendly neighbours; and it was not till the swelling and mortified Jonathan had given her sundry admonitory pokes on the elbow, and finally uttered very audibly, "You are going to bide all day, I expect," that the kind-hearted soul conceived the possibility that it would be best to depart, even before one bit of courting had taken place with Lotte.

This visit appeared over-long to more than one of the persons it brought together; but it would have been well for all, had the effects of it lasted no longer.

CHAPTER IX.

It was not the habit of the Steinmark family to canvass the failings of any guests whom chance might bring to visit them in their remote retirement. The rareness of the occurrence made the face of a stranger welcome, and the genuine kindness of the family temper would generally have prevented any very severe animadversions even in cases where it was not so. But on the present occasion the extraordinary conduct of Karl demanded explanation, and it could only be given by imparting a portion at least of the information he had received respecting Whittlaw.

Had Lotte been present, this must have been necessarily abridged; but as it was, Karl felt it a duty sufficiently to enlighten his father and mother on the subject, to ensure their aid in preventing the repetition of a visit which for many reasons the young man felt convinced was especially intended for his sister.

Frederick Steinmark's attention being awakened by the earnest manner of his son, he listened without any symptom of absence to all he had to say, and then replied:

"As far as our Lottchen is concerned, my dear Karl, I hold your precaution to be needless. Our young neighbour Jonathan would have no more power to sully the purity that you cherish so fondly, than a cloud passing before the sun can tarnish its brightness. You were wrong, dear son, to send her out of the room so abruptly. Lotte need not run to be safe from neighbour Jonathan. In short, Karl, in his

capacity of beau and libertine, I fear him not. But looking at him in his capacity of slave-driver, I would not much have blamed your warmth, if you had fled yourself, and dragged us all in a string after you. Human nature can show nothing so abhorrent to my eyes and my heart as the men who traffic in the muscles and sinews of the poor negroes; and this fellow, this young demon, by your account, does worse—he sells himself as a spy upon their untaught ignorance, that he may betray their idle words and make them bleed for each of them! If fiends can take a human shape, it must be this. Let's talk no more of it; it makes me loathe my home, and almost curse the land in which I have pitched my tent: let us talk of it no more."

This command was literally obeyed. They did talk no more of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw, his occupations, or his character.

Nor did Jonathan Jefferson, on his side, talk much of them. It was not in words that the feelings produced by Karl's treatment of him evaporated; but deep, deep within his heart of hearts did he lay up the insult he had received. He knew, he saw, he heard, he felt,—ay, and he understood it all. Neither his egregious vanity, his prosperous ambition, the luxury in which he already lived, nor his towering hopes for the future, could so far blind, as to make him doubt for an instant that Karl, the German boor, scorned and reviled him,—that he had snatched his sister from his sight as too pure and holy for his eyes, and then had dared to look upon him as he would look upon a negro.

There had been mutual scorn, dislike, and avoidance between them before, but now there was something approaching to hatred in the breast of both; and in that of Whitlaw, a deeply-sworn promise of revenge that he was not very likely to forget.

But to no human being did he breathe a word of the offence he had received, or of the rich atonement which it was his purpose to require when the fitting hour should come. He answered with apparent indifference to his aunt's observations on Lotte's running away; but either to avoid the repetition of them, or from some other reason, it was many months before he again found leisure to leave his duties at Paradise Plantation in order to visit Mount Etna.

With Colonel Dart his importance appeared to increase daily. No person, indeed, could be better fitted for an employment than was Jonathan Jefferson for that which the planter had entrusted to him. He had nothing to do with superintending the fulfilment of the negroes' tasks; that was the duty of the different overseers, one of whom was attached to every separate gang. The large estate of Colonel Dart grew sugar, cotton, and rice; and as the cultivation of each of these articles required a different kind of labour, and even a different species of physical power in those employed upon it, the slaves were as distinctly divided as if they had belonged to different proprietors;

even the huts in which they dwelt were grouped in widely-distant parts of the property, so that Paradise Plantation could boast of three distinct negro villages. There were but two things which belonged to them all in common : these were, Colonel Dart, who was their general master, and Jonathan Jefferson Whittlaw, who was their general spy.

The manner in which the business belonging to this latter office was performed might well propitiate the favour of Colonel Dart. The employment was congenial to the spirit of the employed, and was executed with intelligence, zeal, and unwearying perseverance. The task was moreover by no means an easy one. To watch the execution of a given portion of labour in a given time, and to spur the languid spirit or the failing strength of a suffering wretch to its performance, may require an active and unshrinking agent ; but his occupation is at least easily comprehended, and requires no faculties and no qualities which may not readily be found among the white population of a slave-holding country. Not so the employment entrusted to Jonathan Jefferson : to execute it with success, demanded great readiness, tact, presence of mind, and, above all things, most consummate cunning. It was his custom, from the hour the nature of his employment was first explained to him, to assume the appearance of being occupied by a variety of duties, all very naturally belonging to the situation of a confidential clerk. Thus, he would sometimes be seen riding through the grounds with an apparatus for measuring trees ; then it would be evident that it was making a map of the estate upon which he was intent. At one time the construction of every separate hut occupied so minute an attention, that each village took several weeks to be examined and set to rights ; at another, the mode of cooking the negro food demanded his peculiar care,—and this also kept him long employed upon the interior of the huts. Then again his duty took him into the fields, and the drains and ditches became the objects of his most persevering examination. On all these occasions he had from time to time need of the assistance of such negroes, whether men, women, or children, as were within his reach ; and in this manner he became personally acquainted with every slave on the estate before he had been employed upon it a year. For a long time these various pretences answered perfectly,—as far, at least, as leading the negroes to believe that his ostensible was his real business among them. But though for a while he succeeded in this, he failed totally and altogether in obtaining in any single quarter the slightest approach to confidence from the wary slaves ; nor could he by any means contrive to learn aught respecting them beyond what his eyes enabled him to perceive. His reports therefore were for a long time confined to the statement of a greater or less degree of cleanliness, industry, and the like ; but

as to how much or how little each sable victim knew of what was passing beyond the limits of Paradise Plantation—whether the attempts making in various quarters to ameliorate their condition had been in any degree made known to them, was what he found it utterly beyond the reach of all the arts he could make use of to discover.

It was quite impossible to doubt either the intelligence or zeal of his confidential agent, and therefore Colonel Dart neither expressed nor indeed felt anything approaching to dissatisfaction at the abortive result of his endeavours to obtain information on these very important points; he only wished him to go on as he had begun, kindly encouraging the young man to persevere notwithstanding his want of success, by observing that if so much cleverness and ingenuity failed of discovering the mischief he feared, he should soon have the comfort of believing that it did not exist at all.

Jonathan himself, however, was not quite of this opinion. He had more than once fancied that he had heard a voice reading or praying in his stealthy approaches to some of the more distant huts; but no sooner had the murmur reached him than it ceased,—clearly proving that, if indeed the sound itself were not imaginary, some person was on the watch to guard against surprise. On every occasion where this had occurred, he uniformly found, on entering the premises, that the persons occupying them were sedulously employed in their laborious household duties, and that not the slightest trace could be discovered of their having been engaged in any other.

Young Whitlaw knew his patron too well to venture upon rousing his terrors by what might be so purely imaginary: he knew that he should probably be himself the greatest sufferer were he to make a statement which he could in no way substantiate, and he therefore continued to report the total absence of every appearance of religious mutiny (as the breaking in of a ray of light upon these unhappy beings is designated), determined at the same time to mark well the spots whence he had fancied the forbidden sounds to have proceeded, and to omit no possible means of ascertaining whether they were real or not.

Shortly after he had made up his mind not to mention his suspicions to Colonel Dart till he had more assured grounds for them, it chanced that on two following evenings the same species of measured murmur struck his ear as he approached the remotest hut on a cotton plantation which was skirted on two sides by forest. As before, the sound ceased as he made another step in advance after hearing it; but in both cases he found on entering the hut a young negress, who, though in the act of very busily washing linen, had, as he conceived, an air of hurry and confusion.

She was a singularly handsome girl, who had more than once at-

tracted his attention in the fields; and he now attempted to make a sort of toying acquaintance with her, by remarking the roundness of her arms, displayed as they were, nearly to the shoulder, for the convenience of her occupation.

It is singular that the only evidence his ready wit could discern to confirm his suspicions that this young negress had been guilty of pronouncing, or at least of listening to a prayer, was found in the peculiarly sweet and innocent expression of her countenance. Had an individual who felt and acknowledged the effect of religion come to exactly the same conclusion, there would certainly have been nothing extraordinary in it: but that Jonathan Jefferson Whittlaw, who till eleven years of age had never entered a church or chapel of any kind, and who, excepting from occasional phrases from poor Clio, doubtful and mystical from inevitable ignorance, had scarcely heard the name of God till he was taught by his patron to watch for its being pronounced by a slave as an overt act of mutiny—that *he* should, in a countenance expressive of the purest candour and most ingenuous modesty, see something which forcibly suggested the idea that she had been taught the worship of a Christian, is remarkable, and shows pretty plainly, despite the severity used towards them, what the general effect left on the minds of the slave-holders must have been by those who had been found guilty of listening to religious instruction.

Young Whittlaw looked in that innocent young face, and instantly decided upon the means he would take to learn what was passing in her heart.

The fearfully demoralizing effects produced among the female slaves by the unlimited power of those placed in authority over them, together with the dreadful penalties attached to every species of disobedience, is well known to all who are in any degree acquainted with the fearful statistics of a large negro population. So deep and so general is the degradation of character consequent upon vices committed, not from weakness, but from the most inevitable and hateful necessity, that the miserable victims cease at last to be conscious of shame, though awake to suffering; and it is only where the undaunted courage of some wandering preacher of the Gospel has taught them to believe that they are accountable to a Being superior to their owner, and that, beyond the wretched world that holds them now, there is a happier region for all who deserve to enter it—except where doctrines such as these have been taught and learned, the grossest sensuality is deemed no sin.

Not such, however, was the condition of Phebe, the innocent being who now stood within the grasp of young Whittlaw. Her mother, herself, and two young sisters, had been purchased by Colonel Dart, about twelve months before, from a dealer who got them at the auc-

tion of a bankrupt's effects in a State which bordered on Ohio. There is much difficulty in guarding slaves effectually from the approach of instruction when they are situated near a free State. The free negroes themselves are often the means of enlightening to a certain degree their less happy brethren; and there are few free States in which some individuals may not be found who will gladly seize every opportunity within their reach for the spiritual benefit of the miserable race whose condition they feel to be the greatest misfortune, as it is the greatest disgrace, of their country.

Phebe and her family had been as fortunate in their former situation in Kentucky as they were now in every way the reverse; and a heavy addition in the case of the poor girl to the misery produced by this change of masters, was an attachment to one of her own race as sincere and devoted as ever glowed in the heart of a woman. This lover, who was to have become her husband in the course of a few months, was bought by another.

Till Phebe was carried away from Kentucky, she had no more idea of what the real evils of her condition were than those have who reason upon the institution of slavery from the bosom of freedom, and judging by some (perhaps) well-authenticated history of the happiness of a virtuous negro under the protection of a virtuous master, conceive that though, like all other human institutions, it may be liable to abuse, yet still that it is upon the whole an arrangement which admits of much mutual benefit to the parties.

There are, I believe, many who honestly and conscientiously conceive this to be the case; and that it may have been so in individual instances cannot be doubted: but this ought not in the slightest degree to influence the general question. The principle—the fearful, terrible, unholy principle is still the same; and wherever it is admitted and acted upon, there the social system is poisoned, and vice and misery are the inevitable results.

But not only had Phebe and her family enjoyed the blessing of belonging to a kind and considerate master—they had enjoyed also the still higher advantage of being instructed, and well instructed, as responsible beings and as immortal Christians.

A story is but ill constructed when the relater is obliged to retrograde, yet it is sometimes very difficult to avoid it; and I believe it will be impossible to give the reader a necessary insight into the character of some of the personages the most important in my story, without referring to events which had passed before the time it comprises had begun.

In order, however, to keep the two periods as distinct as may be, my retrospect shall have a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER X.

AT the distance of about ten miles from Lexington in the State of Kentucky, is, or rather was, a fine arable and pasture farm, the neat and careful cultivation of which might have reminded a European of the fertile fields of England.

Henry Bligh, the proprietor, though he employed slaves both as indoor and outdoor servants, detested the system, and scrupled not, though at the risk of bringing upon himself the ill-will of many, to declare both publicly and privately, that the union of the States would never be securely cemented till they were all governed by equal laws, and till every human being who drew breath upon their soil might lift his voice to heaven and say, "I am an American, and therefore I am free."

But the beautiful spot Henry Bligh inhabited was his own,—it had, too, been his father's; it was his own birth-place, and that of his children; and therefore, instead of seeking an abode where slavery was not, he contented himself with remaining and doing all the good in his power where it was.

A motherless son and daughter constituted his whole family, and for many years they and their negroes continued to inhabit "Beech-tree Farm," without the relative situation of either party being a source of discomfort to the other.

Among several peculiarities in the character of Henry Bligh, was an averseness to letting his children quit his own house and his own care. He was himself a man of literary habits and extensive reading; and under his eye, and aided solely by his instructions, Edward and Lucy Bligh acquired more general information and more studious habits than are often found even in the more polished parts of the Union.

It was a consciousness of this, and of the utter unfitness of both son and daughter either to increase the property he should leave them, or to enjoy life with less of easy indifference to daily expense than he had accustomed them to, which made him listen to the proposals of an acquaintance at Lexington for rapidly increasing his fortune by placing a small sum of ready money which he possessed in a newly-established banking concern.

The bank failed, and Henry Bligh was completely ruined. His ignorance of business had led him to conceive that the six thousand dollars he had placed in the bank was all he risked; but his name

was in the firm, and house, lands, stock, and furniture, were all seized and sold by auction, towards clearing the large demands of the creditors.

A misfortune such as this might weigh down the spirits of any man ; but poor Bligh was singularly ill calculated to support it. He, and his two pure-minded, intellectual, but very helpless children, were left utterly and literally destitute ; and it was only by the sale of some articles of wearing apparel which they were permitted to retain, that their existence was for some time supported.

The only expedient which suggested itself to Edward by which he might hope to maintain his father and sister, was the opening a day-school in the populous village near which they had lived. By the aid of a neighbour who lent him a ruinous barn for the purpose, he so far succeeded as to be spared the agony of seeing his broken-hearted father and delicate sister actually want bread. But the exertion and fatigue which achieved this were overwhelming, and the objects of his care saw the young cheek fade and the bright eye grow dim under the irksome and unwonted toil. Poor Lucy saw it, and determined to divide the labour. Without consulting either father or brother, whose principal occupation and delight had been to guard her from every care and every sorrow, she stole from the corner of their shed in which her father and herself sat apart during the hours of Edward's labour, and passing, for the first time since she left her home, through the long village street, she called at every house, begging permission to instruct their girls at a price so low that avarice was tempted,—and in a voice so sweet, and yet so sad, that few ears could listen to it unmoved.

The consequence was, that on the following Monday Lucy's side of the barn held nearly as many pupils as Edward's.

There was much to rejoice at in this,—and perhaps they did rejoice. But the arrangement necessarily left the unhappy father more alone ; and whether it were that his spirits failed the more completely from this circumstance, or that his cup was full and he could bear no more, certain it is that he declined daily and hourly from that time, and in less than in three months was attended to the grave by his unhappy orphans.

It had long been Edward's intention to enter the church ; but, though his father never opposed it, the putting his wish in execution had been delayed from the reluctance which Mr. Bligh felt to part with him for the period necessary for the probationary studies which must precede the taking orders

This most unfortunate delay left him totally without profession or resource of any kind ; and with a sister who was dearer to him than his own life, and whose habits were those rather of refinement than

of usefulness, he had now to seek bread and shelter for both, with an aching heart and weakened health.

It is difficult to imagine consultations for the future between two young people, in which there was less of hope and more of despondency than those of Edward and Lucy Bligh. The world was before them, but it was a blank. They each felt conscious of superior powers, but more deeply conscious still of their utter incapacity to turn them to account. Lucy, though thoroughly well-read, and with information equally profound and extensive, had nevertheless no accomplishments by the teaching which she might hope to gain the means of existence. Who would pay her for her love of Pascal, her familiarity with Dante, or her enthusiasm for Shakspeare?

"Would I could work at any useful trade, dear Edward!" she said, after they had canvassed the improbability that any one should think her qualified for the situation of Governess. "I am still young enough to turn my thoughts away from all that has hitherto engrossed them, and to take interest in a new manner of existence; but the difficulty is to find out some handicraft of which I am capable."

"Yes, Lucy, you have proved that you can submit to toil," replied her brother. "There are few occupations I should conceive so wearing to the heart and soul as teaching children whose intellects have never been awakened beyond the yearning to have their animal wants supplied;—Lucy, it is dreadful!"

"Let us not think of it; it is over for the week at least," replied his sister. "To-morrow is Sunday, Edward, and we will try to fancy that we are not—as we are. But why is it, Edward, that the task of instruction is now so terrible, when I used to take such extreme pleasure in teaching poor black Phebe? Is it possible that I am so wicked as to find delight in what was merely a matter of will or whim, and that the same thing shall become hateful to me as soon as it is my duty to do it?"

"Do not treat yourself with so great injustice, my poor girl. The teaching Phebe was a task that might have given pleasure to the most refined and intellectual person living. Her docility, her gentleness, her intelligence, her piety, and her warm gratitude, made the office of her instructor perfectly delightful. You surely cannot compare that to the unspeakable fatigue of the occupation in which we are now engaged?"

"No, certainly, Edward, it resembles it in no way, and I am glad that you deem it is no wickedness of mine which leads me to think so. Poor Phebe!—I wish I knew where and how she was. The seeing the poor faithful creatures we had endeavoured to make so happy round us scattered about over the Union just as chance might decide, was not one of the least painful circumstances attending our

sad downfall. And Cæsar, too,—the gay, kind-hearted, generous Cæsar!—I would do much to know their destiny. Should they have been parted, their misery must be great indeed, for never did two young creatures love more tenderly.”

She ceased; but it was some minutes before Edward answered her. At length he said, “Lucy, the utter destitution of my position has sometimes suggested thoughts that, wild as I know they must appear to you, would yet have in them a world of consolation, were it not——But I will not leave you, Lucy—”

“Leave me!” exclaimed the poor girl, turning first pale, and then red,—“leave me, brother!—Oh! no, you will not do that—it is impossible!”

“It is impossible, dearest,—I do not think of it; but were you placed where I could believe that you were safe and happy, I have quite decided what my destiny should be.”

“Will you not tell me, Edward?”

“Yes, my love, I will, for the subject is much in my thoughts, and it will be a pleasure to me to talk to you of it. But fancy not that I think of putting it in execution: it is but one of those dreams with which the unhappy, I believe, often solace existence.”

“Let me then dream with you,” said his sister. “If it be a solace, let me share it.”

“You shall; but take care that you do not laugh at me. You know, Lucy, what were my father’s opinions respecting slavery. You know, I think, that he had amongst his books nearly every publication of every land which treated of the subject; but perhaps you do not know the deep, the engrossing interest which this subject excited in me?”

“Your reading was so general,” replied his sister, “that I certainly did not remark that these publications occupied you particularly.”

“They occupied me too intensely to permit my talking of them. I feared to be deemed an enthusiast on a subject to which I would willingly have brought profitable and efficient wisdom at the cost of half my life. The point on which my meditations turned by day and by night, was less the personal bondage of the negro race, than the brute ignorance in which their masters permit them to remain; an ignorance which in a thousand—ay, in a hundred thousand instances—prevents the wretched victims of our frightful laws from knowing good from evil. Had our condition remained for a few weeks longer unchanged, Lucy, I was determined to have petitioned my father for immediate leave to obtain ordination, and then to have passed my life in journeying through the regions where this plague-spot of our country is the darkest, in the hope that under the sanction of my sacred

calling I might awaken some of these unfortunates to a consciousness of their immortality. This hope is passed away, like every other that embellished that period of our existence; yet still my spirit seems to bear me perpetually to those scenes of misery with the description of which I have become familiar, and hopeless and helpless as I am myself, I still cannot help believing that, were I at liberty to wander forth among them, I might lead many an ignorant but innocent spirit to hold commune with Him who is not less the God of the black man than of the white. This, Lucy, is what I would attempt, were it not my first and dearest duty to watch over you."

"And were it not that you lack all means for such an enterprise, Edward, and would do so no less if I lay in the grave-yard beside our father,—were it not for this, I might be still more wretched than I am, from knowing that I am a restraint upon you. Had we wherewithal to sustain life as we journeyed, I would not be your hindrance; brother, but your aid. I would go with you, and I can even think that I too might be useful. Could I but meet such pupils as my poor Phebe, I should never be weary of teaching."

All this seemed at the time but idle talk; but accident ripened the thoughts that were then dropped, and much that deeply affected the destinies of the brother and sister resulted from it.

They both pursued their labours in the village school they had instituted, successfully, though wearily, and even found that they were enabled to gain more than they required for their daily support. Their uncomplaining industry, and the conscientious manner in which they performed the duties they had undertaken, brought them all the patronage and all the assistance which the poor neighbourhood could give; and it is probable that they might long have continued in the same occupation, had not the arrival of the following letter awakened feelings which led them to a different and much less tranquil mode of life.

The letter was from black Phebe, the affectionately remembered slave and pupil of Lucy Bligh.

"HONOURED LADY AND MISTRESS,

"Grief and sorrow are at my heart. I wish our God had not made it his command that we must not die and go to him, when sufferings come too much to bear. I do not think that you, or our kind master, or our Master Edward, know anything at all about what being a slave means in this fearful country near Natchez. It means labour till strength fails—stripes till the blood runs down—wickedness till God must turn away his face—and shame, and suffering, and woe, till life seems worse, much worse than death.

"Dear and honoured mistress, I write to ask if you can tell me where my promised husband is. Oh, my poor Caesar!—if he could see me, and all that is about me! Perhaps Caesar is dead. I sometimes think he must be; and if I

knew it, I think, dear honoured mistress, I should die too, without offending God."

* * * *

The letter then proceeded at greater length than it is necessary for the reader to follow, to describe the state of Colonel Dart's slaves—their ignorance, their vice, and their sufferings—and concluded by saying, that if the unhappy writer heard nothing as to the fate of her lover, or concerning the protectors, the friends, and instructors of her youth, she thought these would prove to be her dying words, for that she felt her heart sinking within her, and trusted that God would take her to his mercy before she had suffered much more.

How poor Phebe had contrived to convey her melancholy letter to the post remained a mystery; but its effect upon her former mistress proved that she had not overrated the interest felt for her by those from whom she had been so cruelly torn. Lucy wept over it bitterly, and when she put it into her brother's hand, she said with a feeling of enthusiasm almost equal to his own, "Edward! if we had one hundred dollars in the world, I should say that, useless and unconnected with the world as we are, we should do well to set forth together on a pilgrimage to the wretched land where our poor Phebe and her fellow-sufferers languish. We should have no power to redeem them from their worse than Egyptian bondage; but might we not be enabled to throw such a light upon the everlasting future as might teach them to feel with less bitterness the miseries of the dreadful but passing hours of the present?"

Lucy's soft eyes were lighted up with an energy and earnestness that her brother had never seen in them before. He took Phebe's letter, and having perused it attentively, returned it in silence, and left the little room, which by degrees he had converted into a decent shelter. In a few minutes he returned, bearing in his hand a small box, which he opened, and poured the contents into his sister's lap.

"Here are forty dollars, Lucy," he said, "obtained partly by the sale of linen which was no longer fit for my use, and partly by the little weekly savings we have made since my poor father's death. This sum is already sufficient to convey us to Natchez, and to support us in the manner in which we now live for several months. I do believe, my sister, that we are called to this work. The singular education we have received, and the still more singular isolation of our condition, seems to point us out as belonging to those, who having no worldly ties to withhold them should go forth amongst the wretched and the ignorant to pour the balm of God's word into their hearts. While I thought you, Lucy, unequal to the task, I put the hope of performing it far from me, for I deemed that my first duty was to cherish and protect my orphan sister: but now—now that I read in your eyes the

same devotion to this cause which I feel at my own heart, shall I from any cowardly misgivings of your strength or my own, attempt to check your holy zeal? Forbid it, Heaven!—I am ready, Lucy. Let us finish the labours of the week, dispose of the trifles we have collected round us, and armed with the courage which such a cause should give, let us set forth for the plantations of Louisiana. Perhaps we may again find bread, by collecting a school among the white settlers in the forest behind Natchez. But this is a secondary consideration.—Lucy, have you courage to do this?”

It would be difficult to analyze the feelings of Lucy Bligh as she listened to this proposal. What she had uttered in the first warmth of her feelings on reading the melancholy statement of the poor slave, though as perfect in truth as her own spotless heart, was nevertheless spoken with such a conviction that the scheme she mentioned was impracticable, that her mind had in fact never contemplated the dangers and difficulties it must involve. But now that it was at once brought before her as a thing to be done, or not done, according to her judgment and her will, she trembled.

“If indeed, my brother, you deem this great enterprise possible, and our duty, I will follow you in it, body and soul, so long as nature shall give me strength to do so.”

It was thus that, after a few moments' delay, Lucy replied to the unexpected proposal; and if the fervour of her consent was tempered by a shade of timidity, her brother saw it not. The most earnest wish of his heart was about to be fulfilled; enthusiasm had taken the place of all ordinary considerations of prudence, and even the dangers and difficulties which his sister must inevitably encounter appeared to his exalted feelings only a ray the more in the crown of glory they were about to win.

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Their walk to the banks of the Ohio, their embarkation on board a steam-boat, the various sufferings of the delicate Lucy during her deck-passage of many days, and the changeful feelings of her brother, wavering between the tenderness of a man and the sternness of a martyr, must be passed by without any detailed description; and the reader must rest contented with knowing that at the distance of one month from the period of the conversation I have last recorded, the brother and sister had established themselves in a small room, with a loft over it, at an obscure clearing in the forest to the north-east of Natchez, which made part of the premises of a poor back-woodsman, who thankfully restricted his family to the use of half their dwelling, for the consideration of twenty-five cents per week, as the rent of the remainder.

The curiosity of their host and his wife was satisfied or baffled by

being informed that they were an orphan brother and sister desirous of gaining a living by instructing the children of the neighbouring settlers. As this statement was strictly true, it was threatened with no danger from any discovery; and as their scholars were not at first very numerous, the long rambles which Edward took in the forest and neighbourhood attracted neither attention nor inquiry.

In a country so thickly peopled with slaves as Natchez and its vicinity, it was but too easy for the enthusiastic and persevering Edward Bligh to discover a multitude of human beings totally deficient in that knowledge which it was the sole passion of his young heart to spread abroad. And never did a hope more holy, an ambition more sublime, engross the soul of man. Remote as is good from evil, was the principle which sent him forth, thus self-elected and self-devoted, to raise the poor crushed victims of an infernal tyranny from the state of grovelling ignorance to which they were chained by their well-calculating masters, from that which swells with most unrighteous vanity the hearts of many among ourselves, inclined to separate from the established faith in which they were educated, and to hold themselves apart, as chosen saints and apostles of another.

As well might a philanthropist labouring in a desert where no abler hand could be found to minister relief to the sick and suffering—as well might such a one be compared to the audacious quack who, thrusting instructed science aside, claims reverence for his own daring ignorance, as Edward Bligh to the self-seeking fanatics who canker our establishment.

It is true, indeed, that the praise justly due to his excellent intentions cannot be as fully accorded to his prudence. His judgment was unquestionably shaken by the fervour of his zeal, or he would not have urged his young sister to an enterprise so pregnant with difficulty and danger. But this chapter is a retrospect, and therefore must not forestall the future.

About two months before the domiciliary visit of young Whitlaw to the hut of Phebe's mother, Lucy and Edward Bligh had found means to see and converse with their former dependants. But terror at the idea of being discovered to hold intercourse with strangers almost conquered the delight with which the affectionate Phebe greeted her beloved mistress, and nearly all their subsequent meetings had been held at dead of night in the depth of the forest which divided the boundary of Colonel Dart's plantation from the dwelling which sheltered the Blighs.

Phebe's hut was very favourably situated for her stealing to these midnight meetings. A clear spring which rose near the verge of the woods had led to the erection of a washing-house beside it: in this house Phebe and her mother had been recently placed as laundresses

to a part of the establishment : and as no other dwelling was within sight, the grateful and affectionate girl ran little risk of discovery when creeping from her pallet into the forest, and returning to it again before sun-rise.

Before leaving Kentucky, Edward Bligh ascertained from the auctioneer who sold his father's slaves, that Cæsar had become the property of a manufacturer at New Orleans ; intelligence which caused as great joy to Phebe, as the knowledge that the loved one was living next door might have done to a less despairing mistress. Having satisfied the poor girl on this point, Edward proceeded to explain to her the hopes which had brought him to the scene her letter described as so full of misery and sin. The dialogue which followed this communication may throw some light on the circumstances which took place afterwards.

"I hope, Phebe," said Edward, "that you will be able to put me in the way of awakening your miserable fellow-labourers to a sense of their own importance in the sight of Heaven, and to the blessed hopes of happiness in a life to come."

"Ah ! dear master Edward !" replied Phebe, "the poor black souls think only but of their bodies in this world, and their stripes and their labour and their bad food when the overseer is angry. They will not believe that there is a good God in heaven watching to make it all up to them by-and-by."

"Have you never told them this, Phebe?"

"When first I came, Master Edward, and heard them speak, and saw them do, like beings having no souls for the life that is to be after this is over, and when I thought of Cæsar, and that I should never see him more till I met him in heaven, I prayed on my knees every night, when all the world was sleeping, except Phebe—I prayed to God to let me die—"

"Phebe !" interrupted Edward somewhat sternly.

"Master Edward !—don't think me grown bad !—I know it was a sin, I found it out myself though I had no church to go to, no good master to tell me what was right, no Bible to read—I found it out in my own heart, and then I prayed to God to forgive me, and then I strove to do good to those lower, and more wretched than myself, but they could not understand one word I said."

"Then it is the more necessary, Phebe, that we should endeavour to instruct them. Did they receive kindly what you said to them ?"

"Alas ! no, Master Edward, I would not have your ears hear, and still less my dear Miss Lucy's, the terrible words and deeds spoken and done here. The negroes of this country are very miserable—but they are very wicked, too."

"Perhaps it is not their fault, Phebe," said Lucy, "perhaps they

might be easily reclaimed, if one could be found, who, without being a slave himself, could feel for slaves. Do you not think that they would listen to Edward?"

"And where could they listen to him, Miss Lucy?—In the grounds?—Why, if they did but stop to raise their eyes to him, the lash would be on their backs. And think you Master Edward himself would be safe? No! no! you must not peril your precious life, Master Edward, for such as we are. Do you not know that the planters have sworn together to take vengeance on any one who should only be caught teaching a negro to read? And how much more dreadful vengeance would they take on any who should dare to say that the soul of a black man is like the soul of a white one!—You must not think of it, Master Edward,—your life would pay for it."

"And my life shall pay for it, Phebe, if such be the will of Heaven," replied the enthusiast. "Do not throw difficulties in my way, my good girl, by endeavouring to terrify my sister. I am here to preach the doctrine of hope and salvation to the despairing slaves, and neither hardships, nor sufferings, nor danger, nor threatenings—no, nor death itself, shall appal me. So help me Heaven as I keep my word!"

The solemn silence of the night as Edward Bligh uttered these words in the deep still voice of profound emotion added to their effect. The moon shed, through the light boughs of the locust trees under which they walked, a soft pale light on the uplifted face of the young man, which seemed to give an unearthly expression to his countenance. He raised his hat reverently from his brow as he spoke, the cool night-breeze blew the dark curls from his forehead, and as he raised his eyes to heaven, he might have furnished the finest model for a representation of youthful piety that ever blessed a painter.

Phebe gazed at him with reverence, and suddenly dropping on her knees, exclaimed, "Then may Heaven help your work, Master Edward! And Phebe would die too, rather than hinder it: but do not let them see you, Master Edward—the master is——"

"It matters not, Phebe, what he is," resumed Edward. "But kneel not to me, poor child; kneel before the throne of God, and pray for power to help me to perform the task he sets me. You may do it, Phebe,—you may do much to help me."

"Tell me what it is, and I will do it," replied the girl, "though they should lash me into rags for it. What is it I can do, Master Edward?"

Edward Bligh did not reply immediately. Perhaps some feeling of doubt and dread as to the peril to which the poor slave would be exposed if discovered to be his agent kept him awhile in suspense; but the impulse that urged him onward in defiance of every danger which might befall himself and his still dearer sister, soon drove before it

whatever reluctance this thought might have created : he paused in his walk, and the two young girls who were on each side of him pausing likewise, looked up into his young and beautiful countenance as if they were to read their destiny there.

"It is no light and easy task, Phebe, to which Heaven has called us. The circumstances of our lives, though we are still very young, have been so strangely ordered that we cannot but see the hand of God in it. An immediate Providence is surely visible in the arrangement of that series of events which, contrary to all human calculation, has brought us thus together on the spot where, perhaps, beyond all others upon earth, we may hope to serve the cause for which the Son of the Most High gave his own sacred blood. In this belief we shall find hope, strength, long-suffering, and courage, unto the end. Have you this belief, Phebe?"

"I do believe that you, Master Edward, may have been chosen by the wise God to teach and to save poor negroes. But I!—Oh, no! that would be to think myself equal to you and to Miss Lucy. But I do not want such a thought as that to make me faithful. Tell me what to do; and if I do it not, then scorn the poor black girl, even as she is scorned by all other white men. What shall I do, Master Edward?"

"First, Phebe," replied Edward, "endeavour to ascertain with certainty who among the numerous slaves who are your fellow-labourers on the estate to which you belong, are the most likely to listen to the word of God. Let me and my sister know their names, and in what quarter they are employed. It will then be necessary, before we begin our work, to arrange the time and place where, with the least danger to themselves, they may be able to meet and listen to us. When this is done, we must take measures to receive them. You thus perceive, my good Phebe, that your services will be most essential to us."

Phebe's only reply was again dropping on her knees, and kissing the ground that his advancing step would press—but she spoke not a single word. Then, rising to her feet, she resumed her place beside him; but as she did so, a deep sigh smote on the ear of Lucy.

"You sigh, Phebe!" said her former mistress kindly. "Be candid with us—conceal nothing!—Tell me why is it that you sigh thus heavily?—Something is on your mind, Phebe. You fear to do what Edward asks of you."

"Miss Lucy!" said the girl, suddenly standing still, "thanks to your blessed teaching, I know much—for a poor black girl, I know very much, and may the God of all knowledge reward you for it. But still my mind is dark compared to yours; and if I sigh, it is because I cannot see—not so clearly as I ought to see—beyond the stripes, and chains, and tortures that must come upon us here. Tell me, dear

mistress, dear master—tell me, when we are dead, when we have died for this business we have got to do, will not both of you be great and powerful and high and happy—very, very happy in heaven?”

“Die for it, Phebe!” exclaimed Lucy trembling,—“Die for it?—Surely the reading the Bible to such of the poor slaves as wish to hear it can endanger the life of no one.”

“You are terrified, my poor girl,” said Edward, gently; “do not be afraid to tell me so. You fear the overseer’s lash—is it not so? I will not involve you in the business, Phebe; I will myself make acquaintance from time to time among the slaves when they are least watched—and I will only seek the aid of Heaven.”

The black girl burst into tears.

“Oh! could I speak as you speak, Master Edward,” she said,—“could I know how to show what is in my heart,—you would not think that it was the overseer’s lash, nor any other thing that could harm *me*, that made me fear to help you in this. But I know one thing, one dreadful thing better than you do—I know that to teach a slave will bring down vengeance on Miss Lucy and on you; I know it, and my blood runs cold as I look at you both, with the soft, quiet moonlight that seems full of God’s own goodness shining on you—when, perhaps, the next time it comes round again it may light the wicked ones to look for you—and to find you.”

Phebe ceased to speak, for tears choked her utterance, and neither of her companions answered her. Edward was weighing solemnly, and, as he hoped, wisely, the purport of her words; and Lucy remained in anxious expectation that he would answer them. But it was Phebe who again spoke. She dashed the tears from her eyes, and said with firmness,

“Now, dear master—now, dear mistress, I have told you all, and never more will Phebe speak a backward word concerning the good work. If you die for it, happy and glorified will I be to die with you. I know two slaves, Master Edward, that I think will listen to me at once; shall I bring them just to those dark trees to-morrow night?” she said, pointing to a group of ilex.

The young slave now spoke without faltering; she knew the danger they were about to incur infinitely better than her hearers did. Of this she was well aware, and the idea that it was her duty to tell them so, and perhaps thereby to check their hopes, had made this conversation terrible to her. But never did martyr give himself body and soul to the work which he knew must bring him to the stake, more devotedly than did black Phebe henceforward bind herself to this. Her last word of warning was uttered.

If Edward Bligh had listened with doubt and dread to her predictions for one short moment, it was infinitely more for the sake of his

beloved sister, and also of the poor slave herself, than from any consideration touching his personal safety. When, therefore, Phebe's last words seemed to urge him on, he caught them as if they were a fresh awakening sent from heaven, and at once, and, as he hoped, forever, shaking off the creeping sense of danger which had unnerved him for an instant, he eagerly accepted the appointment, and then dismissed her to her mother's hut with an ardent and affectionate blessing; after which he carefully led back his trembling sister through a narrow forest-path to her humble and anxious pillow. Their walk was wholly silent, each being absorbed by thoughts which worked too strongly within them to permit of conversation.

Edward's soul was wrapt into the highest state of enthusiasm. He now felt himself launched on the career which he had so long and ardently desired to pursue; while Lucy pondered heavily the words of fearful foreboding to which the too well-instructed slave had given utterance.

After this statement, the reader will be at no loss to divine whose voice it was which had from time to time reached the ear of young Whittlaw in sounds which seemed to indicate reading and prayer; nor will it be difficult for him to conceive with what feelings the wretched Phebe listened to the licentious proposals of the man whose eye she knew was open and watchful to discover what she would willingly have given her life to hide.

With ingenuity inspired by affection, she had hitherto contrived effectually to conceal the visits of Edward at two or three of the remotest huts. His converts already amounted to fifty; and the more numerous they became, the more difficult was it to guard against surprise. But so ably had this young girl arranged the manner of their meetings, which were never general except at dead of night and in the thickest covert of the forest, that not all the watchfulness of Whittlaw had hitherto enabled him to make any discovery. The voice he had heard was indeed that of Edward Bligh; but his auditors at these times never exceeded three or four, whom he deemed to be in want of especial instruction; and on such occasions Phebe not only kept guard, but had previously taken measures so effectually to ensure the timely retreat of those assembled, as to have rendered the repeated interruptions of Whittlaw perfectly harmless.

Her courage had therefore gradually increased; and the triumph of her success, made up as it was of various feelings, amounted to a glowing sense of happiness which lent lustre to her eyes and elasticity to every movement.

The unhappy girl probably owed the first notice and admiration of the young libertine to this; and when persuaded that if instruction of any kind were going on, Phebe must be engaged in it, he conceived the

idea of gaining her affections, and thus discovering her secret, a most hateful union of passion and treachery took possession of his soul.

Fierce and frightful were the disappointment and the rage produced by the wretched girl's silent but most eloquent abhorrence as she shrunk from his hateful caresses; and horrible were the blasphemies which burst from his young lips as he marked the appeal of her raised eyes to heaven. Scorn and revilings succeeded to his words of blandishment, and he at length left the hut, pronouncing in a tone that made her heart sink within her—"Slave and rebel!—Beware!—You shall be taught to know your duty!"

CHAPTER XI.

On all former occasions, when Whitlaw had entered a cabin whence Phebe's timely caution had previously dismissed either Edward or Lucy Bligh and those met to listen to them, his departure from it had been a signal for thanksgiving and joy; but now the poor girl sank on the floor of her dwelling in an agony of terror and despair.

"Poor wench!" said her mother, turning her head from the tub at which she was washing. Two large tears fell over her dark cheeks, but she spoke not another word, or gave further token of sympathy or sorrow. A slave may feel her heart swell with tenderness or with grief; but beyond the mere animal functions of giving life and nourishment, she cannot show that she is a mother.

It had been arranged, and always carried into effect, that the time occupied by the intruder in looking round the hut and questioning the inhabitants should be employed by those who retreated from it in making their escape into the woods, which were close upon every habitation used for the prayer-meetings; and the consciousness that it would be no easy task to find them, was a never-failing source of triumph and delight to the negroes who remained to meet the puzzled eye of the inquisitor. But now Phebe would have suffered the lash patiently, could she by doing so have ensured a few minutes conversation with Lucy Bligh. From her she was sure of a species of sympathy which it was impossible she should find from any one else, and she might give her counsel—most important counsel.

Black Phebe, from the first instant that Whitlaw gave her to understand his licentious purpose, was as steadfastly and desperately determined to resist it, as Rebecca to save herself from the Templar. There appeared but two ways to effect this—death and flight. The

former, her simple but most devoted piety forbad ; and for the second, the difficulties which must accompany it made her brain feel dizzy as she thought upon them. Her dear mistress and her master, as she ever called Edward and Lucy Bligh, might suggest something to help her in this her utmost need. But where were they?—Buried in thickets whose impervious shelter had hitherto been her best consolation. She rose from her abject position, and leaving the cabin by the door which opened upon the forest, she walked mournfully onward, with a sort of vague hope that she might chance to fall upon the retreat of her friends ; but ere she had proceeded a hundred yards, her eye was caught by the movement of several of the large and heavy leaves of a tuft of palmetoes which grew beside the path. No breeze was stirring, and from the situation of the plant, no very light breeze could have produced such a movement as she had seen. Her first idea was that a large snake might be concealed beneath it ; but a second glance showed a portion of the white dress in which the Louisianian gentlemen indulge during the summer months.

Whitlaw was so dressed, and Phebe instantly divined that it was he who lay couching there, probably in the hope of seeing her take the way by which those whose voices he insisted upon it he had heard, had made their escape.

This thought at once restored her presence of mind, for it recalled to her recollection the danger of her friends. Without changing her manner or her pace, she proceeded a little farther in the same direction, and then stopping at the foot of a locust-tree fully exposed to the view of whatever eyes might look forth from the shelter of the palmetto, she sat down, as if, naturally enough, she wished to meditate in solitude on the scene which had just occurred.

For many minutes she sat thus, without venturing again to look towards the spot where, as she believed, her enemy lay in ambush ; and it was at length her ear, and not her eye, which again gave notice that some living thing was indeed concealed behind the rich foliage. The sound, however, was produced by a movement that no longer sought concealment ; an active jump and a few bounding steps brought the object of her terror and her hatred to her side.

“ Well, now, I expect you’ll be more clever, my fine girl,” he began, “ now that we’ve got neither mother nor brats to watch us. I guess it’s a first chop bit of good luck for you having jest hit my fancy.”

This speech was accompanied by a repetition of the caresses he had proffered in the hut.

Phebe slipped from his embraces, and standing at some distance from him, said—

“ When the white commands the black to labour, the black must

obey;—but when the white commands the black to love, it is only the wicked who make believe to do his bidding.”

“ That’s the stickest speech, Phebe, that ever I heard a nigger speak since first I carried a whip for ’em. Why, there isn’t a copper to choose between you and the play-actors at New Orlines.—But now, hear me a spell. If you won’t behave yourself as I would have you, and let me see you jump for joy into the bargain, there shall no more skin be left on your back than might serve the tailor for a pattern.—D’ye hear that, you black she-nigger?”

The poor girl clasped her hands together, fixed her eyes upon the ground, and replied not a word.

“ You will run rusty, then, you darnation idiot?”

Phebe neither spoke nor moved.

“ And how long, now, d’ye think I shall keep courting, you smut you? ’Till everlasting, maybe:—but I expect somehow that our courting will come to an end before either of us is much older—and I’ll tell you how it shall be, blackamoor miss. You’ll come to-night as the clock strikes nine to Paradise Plantation, and ask for Mr. Jonathan Whitlaw, the confidential clerk. I’ll take care you shall find him, and I’ll take care, too, that you shan’t get the lash for being about.—Come to be me, d’ye see, at nine o’clock, and I’ll give you a pair of ear-rings. Stay away—that’s all—jest stay away, and you shall have Bill Johnson at your bed-side to-morrow morning with a new cat of first-rate elegant cow-hide, and we’ll see how soon your dainty niggership will be fit to be about and praying again.”

Saying these words, Whitlaw raised himself from the ground, on which he had stretched himself, and walked off, leaving Phebe rather in a state of meditation than of despair.

“ If that be all,” thought she,—“ if the lash be all I have to fear for disobedience, let it come—I can bear it. But how shall I tell Miss Lucy to keep away?—It must be done to-night.”

In pursuance of this resolution, Phebe left her mother’s side at midnight, and found her way through thickets of briars, with no better light than the stars could give by darting a ray here and there through the trees. But she knew her way well to Fox’s clearing, and reached it, a distance of nearly four miles, within an hour. The loft in which Lucy Bligh lodged was also well known to her humble friend, and she succeeded in waking both her and her brother without disturbing any other inmate of the shanty.

It may be recorded as a proof of delicate and almost sublime affection on the part of the poor slave, that she was almost as anxious to conceal from her friends the knowledge of the corporeal suffering she was to endure on the following morning, as to prevent her connexion with

them from being betrayed by their making a visit to her hut when she could no longer be on the alert to guard against discovery. But to achieve this, some skill and a little most innocent artifice were necessary.

In truth, Phebe's spirits had been raised rather than depressed by the farewell words of Whitlaw; for it appeared to her that she was now in some sort the arbitrator of her own destiny, having the choice left her of obeying his commands by attending the rendezvous he had given, or of submitting to receive the lash on the morrow.

The hour of appointment having been long passed before she left her mother's side, and no measures of coercion used to enforce her keeping it, her heart felt lightened of an intolerable load: she believed the caprice which noticed her to be as short-lived as it appeared to her sudden, and shaking off, with a degree of firmness that might have befitted a heroine, the sick shudder which came over her as she remembered the torture she was to endure in the morning, she opened her communication to her wondering friends with composure, and almost with cheerfulness.

"You are frightened to see me here, Miss Lucy?—and Master Edward, too, almost?—But all is safe, and all is well; only Master Edward must not come to-morrow, nor dear Miss Lucy either—nor next day, nor the day after—and perhaps—Oh, yes!—it will be best and safest not to come at all till you see me here again some night to tell you."

"How is this, Phebe?" said Edward gravely. "You tell us that all is safe and that all is well, and yet, that at this time, when our work is prospering more than ever it did before, you tell us that our labour must cease for many days—nay, longer, perhaps, longer than you can say. How is this, Phebe? What does it mean?"

"Master Edward," answered Phebe with the deepest earnestness, "trust to your faithful slave. I would not ask you to remain away, but for the safety of the good and holy cause you love so well. If you come before, I tell you—I shall not be able to watch for you as I have done."

"And why not, Phebe?" said Lucy, who with a woman's tact perceived in a moment that there was something on the poor girl's mind which she did not mean to reveal—"Why not, Phebe?—Remember you are bound to tell us everything, whether good or bad, that concerns the object for which we are here: you must hide nothing from us, or how can we believe you true?"

"Oh! Miss Lucy—But I do not think you would believe me false, let me speak or not; so do not say so—dear, dear mistress, do not say that!"

"We do not, we cannot think you false," said Edward; "but

perhaps you take upon you to judge what is best, when, if you would conceal nothing, I might form my own opinion in a manner more conformable to the interest of the cause I serve, than you can do.—Why do you wish us to cease our visits, Phebe?"

"No, no!—not cease! Only wait, Master Edward, and I will tell you why. The master's confidential clerk——"

Poor Phebe's breath seemed to fail her as she named him.

"What, the man called Whitlaw? The same whose approach has so frequently interrupted us? Does it appear that he knows of our visits?" inquired Edward.

"That same man—it is of him, Master Edward, that we must beware. I saw him hiding behind the palmetoes after you went to-night, and—and he entered mother's house, and threatened to come again, and again;—but if he finds nobody, nor nothing that he expects, why then he will give over coming, and I will tell you, and all will be safe again."

Edward meditated upon her words for some minutes before he answered her. At length he said,

"Perhaps, Phebe, this caution may be altogether unnecessary; and, at any rate, I cannot think it needful that I should abstain from visiting every part of Colonel Dart's plantation because his clerk has entered your mother's house. However, as you have hitherto shown no want either of zeal or courage in this matter, I will comply with your wishes to a certain extent: we will not approach the slave villages for two days. This is Wednesday morning; to-day and to-morrow we will not come: but if before Friday evening, after the working-hours are over and the people gone to bed, I do not see you here, Phebe, you must expect that I shall venture to visit you."

With this promise, as it was all she could obtain, the poor girl retreated, and almost exhausted by agitation and fatigue, returned so slowly through the forest that the first gleam of morning lighted her steps as she approached her mother's hut. Nevertheless she stretched herself on her pallet as she entered it, rather to prepare herself for the torture she anticipated, than with any hope of refreshing her exhausted strength by sleep.

Ere Edward and Lucy Bligh again separated after Phebe left them to finish their night's repose, some few words were exchanged between them indicative of the different feelings to which her visit had given birth.

"I fear, Lucy," said the young apostle, "that this poor girl wearies of the task assigned her. It is much more evident to me that she earnestly wishes to prevent our visits to the plantation, than that she has any good reason for doing so."

"You judge her wrongly, brother!" replied Lucy with some

warmth : " I feel so sure that she has cause, and good cause too, for giving us this caution, that I rather suspect her of diffidence in not making her remonstrance more authoritative, than of a falling off in zeal for having made it at all."

" Well, Lucy, we shall see. But at least remember that it is our bounden duty to take nothing upon trust that can check our progress. I must inquire, and judge for myself."

" But at least promise me that in doing so you will keep in mind the many proofs our poor Phebe has given of devoted zeal and faithful attachment—remember this, Edward, and for my sake do nothing rashly.—Good night!"

" Good night, dear sister! I must not shrink from my duty—but whatever caution is consistent with that, shall be used.—Good night, dear Lucy!"

CHAPTER XII.

DESPITE the terrible forebodings which harassed her spirits, irresistible fatigue closed the eyes of poor Phebe before she had stretched her limbs upon her bed for five minutes; and though her last waking thought was that in a short hour perhaps the lash of the overseer would be suspended over her, she slept soundly.

She slept soundly, but not long. Hardly was the broad sun fairly visible above the horizon, when her mother, who was already risen to pursue her labour, was startled by the sound of approaching footsteps, and stepped out into the drying-ground before the hut to discover who it was that thus early could have business with her. The sight she beheld caused her to turn back shuddering, and the exact truth immediately flashed upon her mind. Two men were striding rapidly towards her dwelling. The one in advance was Whitlaw; but though he was not walking exactly side by side with his companion, he nevertheless was conversing with him, and a loud ribald laugh showed them to be on terms of easy freedom. The man who hung a step behind, was a fellow named Johnson, perhaps the most detested overseer on the estate; and to render his appearance there more unequivocally terrible, he bore aloft in his hand, flourishing it with all the gaiety of a spruce postboy, that dreadful emblem of shame and anguish called a cow-hide cat.

The helpless mother could not for a moment doubt who was to be the victim, or what the act of disobedience to be punished. Hastily going to the straw bed on which her two younger children lay sleeping,

she dragged them away, one in each hand, and retreating by the back-door into the forest, hurried onward among the bushes in the hope of placing herself and the little ones beyond reach of hearing the groans which she knew would soon be wrung from the innocent being she left.

Let not the tender European mother turn with disgust from the apparent selfishness of this retreat. Those only who have seen with their own eyes how slavery acts upon the heart, can fairly judge the conduct of slaves. They are, in truth, where the yoke is laid on heavily, hardly to be considered as responsible for any act, or for any feeling. The dogged quiescence of silent endurance which often gives to the negro an aspect of brutal insensibility, may originate from a temper whose firmness might have made a hero had the will been free; and poor Peggy, when she hurried from the scene of her child's suffering, might have carried with her an anguish the bitterness of which no mother blessed with the power of protecting her offspring can conceive.

When Whitlaw and his official entered, Phebe was still asleep: the fatigue and exhaustion of the preceding day pressed heavily upon her senses, and it was not till the hand of the brutal young man had rudely dragged away the rug which covered the bed, that she opened her eyes and beheld the hateful countenance that hung over her.

Heavy as her sleep had been, this sight chased it in an instant. She attempted to spring from the bed, but Whitlaw's arm seized and threw her back upon it.

"Soh! you are ready for us, my dainty one, are you? All your clothes on, because you expected company—hey?"

And again the fiendish pair laughed loud.

"But that's no go, Johnson," continued the ferocious Whitlaw. "We shall be stumped outright if we attempt to lash her while she's wrapped up this fashion—she won't mind your cat a copper if we let her keep her clothes on."

"Then I expect, my young squire, that we must be after jest giving the nigger the trouble to take 'em off. Be brisk, my beauty," continued the fellow, hitting her arms and legs with the handle of the instrument he held; "I'll smash you outright if you keep me waiting; I tell you that to begin, for I've a deal of business to get through before sun-down."

Phebe by a sudden movement sprang from the bed and stood on her feet before them.

"Do not strip me!" she said, clasping her hands together with trembling eagerness;—"Do not strip me! Let me go to the rice-grounds instead!"

"Maybe we may pay you that compliment into the bargain, my lily;—you have only got to be uprearious and obstinate enough, and

"I'll do you all the favours in that line that your fancy can hit upon," said Whitlaw. "But, jest to begin, you'll be so genteel as to oblige us by stripping your top skin, that we may deal as we like with the milk-white that we shall find under it."

Even on Colonel Dart's plantation Phebe had not yet been accustomed to the lash; her quick intelligence and patient industry together had enabled her so to fulfil her allotted tasks as almost entirely to escape it; and never before had she been exposed to the degrading ceremony to which she was now so peremptorily commanded to submit. She trembled violently, and felt so sick and giddy that she tottered towards the door in the hope of saving herself from fainting.

"Do you mean to try a run for it?" cried Johnson, looking at her without moving, as a dog may be seen to watch a wounded hare, certain, let it struggle as it may, that escape is impossible.

"I should like to see her at it," said Whitlaw. "She's a neat little craft for a nigger; and she'd skip handsome over them stumps yonder, I'll engage for her. Go it, my beauty!" he continued, clapping his hands: "off with ye! You shall have three minutes' law—upon my soul you shall."

Phebe did not run—she had no power to do so; but she hastened with what speed she could to the spring, and from the hollow of her hands drank enough of its cold stream to chase the coming faintness: she then sprinkled her head and face copiously; and thus refreshed and strengthened, she turned back towards the hut, at the door of which Whitlaw and Johnson stood lounging, and each with a cigar in his mouth.

"You are coming back, are you?" cried the former, stepping forward to meet her. "Then I'll be d——d if she hasn't been thinking better of it. So away with you, friend Johnson, and I'll settle this matter myself. However, you may as well leave me the cat in case she should turn about again."

Johnson threw down the instrument without speaking, and prepared to depart.

"Please, master, let me be flogged," said the poor girl beseechingly,—"please let me be flogged, and sent to the rice-grounds afterwards."

"Stay where you are, Johnson!" roared the brutal Whitlaw; "she shall have it now if I never flog nigger more. Strip, black toad—strip, or you shall be soaked in oil and then singed. Strip her, Johnson, d'ye hear?—and if you can't, by the living Jingo I'll help you."

The struggling but helpless victim was seized by the two men at the same moment, and the abhorrent threat would have been quickly executed, had not a discordant laugh from the outside of the hut startled and caused them to desist from their occupation while they turned to ascertain whence the strange interruption proceeded.

The figure which now presented itself at the door might have appalled any one who beheld it for the first time. A negress, seeming to have been originally of almost dwarfish stature, and now bent nearly double with age, whose head was covered with wool as white as snow, and whose eyes rolled about with a restless movement that appeared to indicate insanity, stood on the threshold of the door, one hand resting on a stout bamboo, and the other raised with its finger pointed as if in mockery of the group within; and again a croaking laugh burst from her.

The person of the intruder was known to them all, and moreover she was but a time-worn paralytic slave; yet there was that about her which neither the callous indifference of the driver, nor the bold audacity of the confidential clerk, could look upon unmoved.

This wretched relic of a life of labour and woe had been on the plantation longer than its owner or any of his numerous dependants could remember—her age was indeed asserted by many among them to exceed greatly the length of days usually allotted to even the happiest and idlest of the human race, and yet it was recorded of her that she had borne more children and performed more extraordinary tasks than any other slave was ever before believed to have done. Either in consequence of this species of renown, or for some other reasons connected with her former history, she was considered by her master and all his myrmidons as a sort of privileged personage, neither expected to perform any sort of labour—of which indeed she appeared perfectly incapable,—nor to answer at any of the musters, nor to be challenged for any of her wanderings or wild freaks whatever.

The feeling concerning her wavered, according to the character and temperament of different individuals, between reverence for a being in some sort supernatural, and the mixed pity and fear inspired by the presence of a maniac.

The slaves, with the sole exception perhaps of poor Phebe, firmly believed her to be immortal, and in close communion with some spirit of the air, who at her bidding would bring weal or woe upon the white man or the negro according as they pleased or offended her; and she was accordingly treated with invariable kindness and respect by them all. How much of this superstition was shared by the whites, it might be difficult to say; but the unwonted licence and indulgence accorded her seemed to indicate, considering at whose hands she received it, some sentiment by no means commonly shown by the white race to the black.

“ Rose, Rose, coal-black Rose!
I wish I may be scotched if I don't love Rose !”

were the first words the beldam articulated after she had ceased her

shout of unnatural laughter. "Oh, massa clerk!" she added, "dat be your way making lub!" and again the cabin seemed to ring with her discordant laughter.

Whitlaw had quitted his grasp of Phebe the instant she appeared, and now stood pale with rage, or fear, or both, and apparently undecided as to what he should do or say next.

In order fully to comprehend the conduct of my hero on this and some future occasions, it will be necessary to remember that his education for the first eleven years of his life was of the very lowest kind, and precisely such as to substitute superstition for religion in his mind: nor were the subsequent years, during which he acquired the knowledge of reading and writing at Natchez, at all less likely to inculcate error, instead of truth, respecting the immaterial world, than were those which preceded them.

Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw is no solitary instance of a sharp, active, bold sort of intellect, which at the very moment that it boasts its scepticism in religion, secretly owns and trembles before the influence of superstition.

The moment previous to that at which the palsied and decrepit hag entered, Whitlaw stood fearless and undaunted before Heaven, ready to commit the most hideous crimes in defiance of its laws; but now he stood doubting and unnerved before her, as if awaiting her fiat either to prosecute or abandon his purpose.

"I say, massa clerk," said the old negress, again suspending her mirth,—*"I say, massa, you come wid me under dem black trees, and I teach you summat;—but step softly, massa—don't scare de green birds—they are Juno's spirits."*

As she spoke, she walked across the hut to the back door, which opened upon the forest. Her pace was a singular mixture of activity and decrepitude, every step being something between a jump and a hobble. When she reached the door, she turned to see if he whom she had summoned were following her; and on perceiving that he still stood beside the girl as if undecided, she twisted her uncouth features into a most portentous frown, and raising her bamboo, seemed to be drawing figures with it in the air.

The young man hesitated no longer, but, as if under the influence of her wand, stepped hastily after her. She laid the bamboo lightly on his shoulder as he approached, and peering up into his face, fixed for a moment her restless eyes upon his; then removing her staff, and pointing it towards Johnson, she uttered in a sort of chant, but totally free from all negro peculiarity of pronunciation,

"Solemn words must secret be!
No ear must hear, no eye must see,
What shall pass 'twixt thee and me."

Whitlaw immediately made his attendant a sign to depart, which was promptly and silently obeyed. The old woman then proceeded towards the trees; and Whitlaw followed her, leaving Phebe standing in the middle of the floor trembling between hope and fear, but thanking Heaven with tearful gratitude for this most unexpected relieve.

CHAPTER XIII.

§ HALF-AN-HOUR before midnight on the following Friday, Edward and Lucy Bligh, who had passed the interval in anxious but vain expectation of seeing Phebe, set out together to reconnoitre her dwelling, and to discover, with as much caution as possible, the cause of her delay. The crescent moon, which on the night of Phebe's visit to them had set at too early an hour to befriend her, now made the first part of their expedition delightful; and as they walked hand-in-hand through the primeval forest, any who had listened to their conversation, and marked their young faces in the fine clear obscurity of that faint light, might have fancied that they were the spirits of some purer and holier race, permitted to revisit the land their kindred had lost.

Lucy was a good walker, but the distance which Phebe had traversed in fifty minutes took her an hour and a quarter, and the moon had set and heavy darkness hung upon the landscape when at last they reached the solitary hut of Peggy. So cloudy and dark indeed was the night become, that it was more by the rippling sound of the little stream that trickled from the spring behind the washerwoman's dwelling, than from any object their eyes could distinguish, that they perceived at length that they were at the termination of their walk.

They now approached the door of the hut, and cautiously listened for a sound either within or near it; but all was profoundly still. Lucy, who fancied she should be exposed to less danger if discovered than her brother, prevailed on him to remain at some short distance from the door while she attempted to open it. The latch yielded to her touch, and she entered; but the darkness was such that she could discern nothing.

"Phebe!" she said in a low soft voice hardly above a whisper.

"Phebe!—who is it calls on Phebe?" exclaimed the voice of Peggy; "who is it calls for my poor, poor lost child?"

"It is I—it is Lucy Bligh," was the reply. "Why do you call

her lost?—Tell me, Peggy, where she is gone, and who you have with in the hut?"

"Oh, mistress! mistress!" sobbed out the wretched mother, "then she is not run away to you?—Oh me! Oh me!—that was my only hope!"

"She was with me late on Tuesday night, Peggy," replied Lucy, gently approaching the bed; "but I have never seen her since. When did she quit the hut?"

"Let me get up—let me come out with you into the air!—I feel choking, mistress!" replied the poor negress, who was in truth at that moment totally unfit for any exclamation.

"Do so, my poor Peggy," replied her former mistress kindly. "My brother is near at hand—I will go and bring him into the porch while you get your clothes on; and I trust that we may be able amongst us to find out where my poor Phebe is gone."

Lucy then groped her way out of the hut, and in a few minutes returned with her brother to the open porch which connected the two chambers of the hut, and having cautiously advanced through buckets and rinsing tubs, at last discovered a bench, on which they seated themselves in total darkness to await the coming of Peggy.

"Are you here, mistress?" was pronounced almost close to the ear of Lucy before the sound of any foot-fall had given notice that the negress approached them.

"We are both here, Peggy," replied Edward; "can you not strike a light, that we may see each other while we converse? We have never had a night so dark as this."

"A light, Master Edward!—you were raised on the old master's grounds, and you don't know yet what slavery means. If I was to kindle a light, we would have a dozen cow-hides hanging over us—at least over me, Master Edward—in less than ten minutes."

"Well, then," said Lucy, "we will do without a light. But tell us about Phebe—when did she leave you?"

"Oh me! it was I left her!" replied the poor slave, weeping bitterly,—“it was I left her, Miss Lucy!—Had I stopped by her, I must have knowed something; and now I know nothing—nothing!”

The inquiries of Edward elicited an account of the scene which took place between Whittlaw and Phebe on the evening he had last quitted the hut; and when Peggy repeated the cruel threats with which it had concluded, Lucy exclaimed with a burst of uncontrollable emotion—“Did I not tell you, Edward, that she was true to us?—Oh, my poor Phebe! it was this that she would not tell!—She knew how much we would have done to save her, and she feared the danger it might cost us—dear, generous Phebe!—But I will find her if she be above ground;—what have I to fear?—I am not a slave.—Edward! shall we not seek

for Phebe, in spite of master, overseers, and all ! We are not black blood ;—what is the worst we can fear ?”

“ Murder !” in a deep distinct whisper, was the answer to this question ; and so peculiar was the tone in which it was pronounced, that the brother and sister started, for neither of them recognised in it the voice of their old servant. Nevertheless, it was Peggy who uttered it ; and in the next moment she added, but still in so low a tone as to show that even in that hour of universal rest she feared a listener, “ Nothing less is now punishment enough for any white who dares openly to befriend a slave.”

Bligh well knew that this doctrine was daily becoming more general among the planters. The principles of the “ LYNCH LAW,” which have since been openly recognised, acknowledged, and acted upon with impunity in the face of day, and before the eyes of thousands of American citizens, were indeed at that time only beginning to show themselves in occasional acts of desperate ferocity, which though from the first they were permitted to pass unpunished by the legislatures of the States in which they were committed, had not then fully reached the sort of tacit legality at which they soon afterwards arrived ; but Edward, when from time to time he heard of the outrages perpetrated at New Orleans, had felt, while he shuddered at their atrocity, a something at his heart which seemed like a foretaste of martyrdom.

If there were any mixture therefore of human terror in this sensation, the young enthusiast was himself unconscious of it ; and if his pulse had fluttered and his cheek grown paler than ordinary while listening to the frightful tales which reached him in his forest dwelling, it was only when some idea of Lucy’s being exposed to danger suggested itself.

Thus was it with him now, as he heard the prophetic denunciation of Peggy upon all who should seek to befriend her race. He trembled—and stretching out a cold damp hand to seek that of his sister, who sat beside him, he said sternly,

“ It is your first duty, Lucy, to obey implicitly the brother to whose care it has pleased the Almighty to consign you ;—speak not then so presumptuously of what it is your purpose to do. I have made you, Lucy, my companion in a perilous enterprise ; but I did so in the belief that no rash or self-willed measures on your part would ever thwart or trouble me.”

“ Edward !” exclaimed the startled girl, eagerly grasping his extended hand, “ what reason can you have to doubt my willing obedience to everything you wish ?—What have I said, dear brother, to make you speak thus ?”

“ Forgive me, love !” replied Edward, recovering himself ; “ I was very wrong to doubt you ;—but in truth you terrified me when

I heard you talk of seeking Phebe. This would not be the way to assist her, Lucy: whatever is done in this must be done most cautiously, for her sake as well as your own.—But we have not yet heard all. What happened, Peggy, after your daughter returned from Fox's clearing? You have seen her since, have you not?"

The bereaved mother then related the having perceived the approach of Whitlaw and Johnson on the following morning, and confessed, with the bitterest expressions of self-reproach, that rather than witness the outrage and cruelty which threatened her child, she had escaped with her two little ones into the forest, where she remained in a state of unspeakable misery for about an hour, and then returned sick and trembling to her hut, which she found totally deserted, and with no trace of the scene that had probably been acted there, but the cow-hide that Johnson had thrown on the floor when Whitlaw had first commanded him to retire.

For several minutes after Peggy had concluded her narrative, no sound was heard in the still darkness which surrounded them but the stifled sobs of the poor negress. Lucy was silent, lest the expression of her strong feelings might renew the displeasure of her brother; and Edward himself was too deeply occupied in pondering upon the mysterious disappearance of the girl, to speak hastily on the subject. At length he said,

"Your grief is so violent, Peggy, that it is plain you fear something very terrible.—Let us know all. What is the worst you fear? Do you think that wretch Whitlaw will kill her?"

Edward might have been puzzled how to interpret without the commentary of words the bitter smile which this question brought to the lips of the poor slave; but he saw it not,—and in a moment she answered,

"Kill her, master!—No, they will not kill her, no more than they would the finest horse in the colonel's stable. My Phebe is the flower of all his gang—there is none other like her!" And again tears choked her utterance.

"Then you can fear nothing for her," resumed Edward, "worse than what you fled to the forest to avoid seeing. Think not, poor soul! that I speak lightly of this," he continued, in a voice of the tenderest compassion; "God knows it cannot be more horrible in your eyes than in mine; but if you think her life is safe——"

"But where, Master Edward," exclaimed the mother in agony of grief,—“where is she to live?—That will be the punishment. My Phebe loved her mother!—there's not an overseer on the estate but knows that: for if my limbs ached, it was she was up in the morning to lighten my work; and when I was sick and afraid to say it, it was she was away to the overseer to tell it, and frighten them into thinking

they might lose my labour, and then making all straight by offering to be double tasked. The devil clerk, Master Edward, knows all this, and he has taken her from me on purpose to torture her."

"Likely enough, my poor Peggy," replied Edward; "but, as you are aware that the profit of your owner is the first object, do you not see that it is probable they will not separate you long? They must know that you work better together than you could asunder."

"But that's not all—that's not all!" cried Peggy bitterly; "'tis the price they'll get for her!—Oh, Master Edward, I have always trembled for that! Black Phebe is counted such a handsome girl, that at New Orleans, they say, she'd fetch double what her value would be if she was only kept for her work."

The miserable truth these words contained admitted of no consolation; and the faintly-expressed hope that this most cruel measure might not be resorted to, was all her pitying friends could give.

Lucy started as she perceived that the objects around her were becoming faintly visible.

"We must go, Edward," said she with nervous agitation. "It was our being here on Tuesday evening that brought on all this misery. Let us not be found here again, or poor Peggy may be made more wretched still."

A few minutes longer were occupied in listening to Peggy's earnest prayers that they would use the privilege "their blessed white skin" gave them—such was her phrase—to inquire at Natchez, and in all directions round about, whether "Black Phebe" had been sold.

Edward very solemnly gave his promise that he would fearlessly use every means in his power to obtain intelligence respecting her; and then, leaving some pastoral instructions to be cautiously delivered to his flock during the time he might be employed in this perilous quest, he again led forth his sister into the forest, through which they now found their way without difficulty, by help of the faint light, which gradually increased upon them as they advanced.—But the spirits of both were heavily oppressed. Lucy trembled with the most affectionate anxiety for the safety of her humble friend; and Edward felt more keenly than he had ever before done, how terrible was the responsibility he had taken upon himself in leading his young sister into dangers from which he might find he had no power to shield her. If the peril had threatened himself alone, he would have hailed it as a summons to glory; but when the frightful idea crossed him that Lucy might share it, his courage failed entirely, his heart sunk within him, and tears trembled in his eyes, while he pressed the pale girl to his bosom as he reached the threshold of their own rude home.

"Lie down, my poor Lucy, for an hour or two," he said, tenderly kissing her: "my head is working strangely upon what we have

heard this night,—I want to be alone, and will wander about for another hour or so, and then return to fix the corn-cakes for our breakfast. When they are ready, I will call you, and you shall see if I am not almost as skillful as yourself.—Go to rest, dear love! Sleep, dear Lucy,—sleep!”

CHAPTER XIV.

EDWARD BLIGH had indeed need to be alone. Never till now had his poor spirit been harassed by that worst of human anxieties,—a conscientious doubt as to what it was his duty to do.

Not only had he pledged himself secretly and solemnly before Heaven to devote himself body and soul to alleviate the miseries of American slaves, but he had this night given a promise to one amongst them who, from her well-known worth and faithful services, deserved his warmest zeal;—to her he had promised to be an active agent in discovering her daughter, though he knew that daughter to be in the hands of one who had power and will to punish any interference with the most terrible severity. Could he perform this promise without involving his sister in the danger?—could he break it without violating the vow he had voluntarily pronounced before God?

The agony of his mind was terrible. Could he have seen Lucy placed in safety, his own path would have been plain before him;—nay, it would have appeared to his exalted contemplation both easy and delightful. He firmly believed that it might, and probably would, lead him to death; but it would be the blessed death of a martyr, and he hugged the idea of it with a sort of rapture. But even at the moment that he seemed to see a crown of glory waiting for him, the image of Lucy came before his eyes, and his hope and his strength failed at once. At one moment he had convinced himself that it was his duty to leave Louisiana immediately, and pursue the business of teaching with his orphan sister either in the State of Ohio, or any other not infected with the mildew of slavery which they might be able to reach. But scarcely had he permitted himself to breathe freely as one whose doubts were over, when, not only Peggy and Phebe, but all his woodland congregation resumed their place in his memory, and he held himself in abhorrence as a renegade and a coward.

This mental strife lasted much beyond the hour he had allotted for his walk; but the corn-cakes were forgotten, and the weary Edward threw himself at length upon the ground utterly exhausted both in mind and body.

In this situation, "Nature's kind restorer" settled on his eyelids, and he slept long and soundly. When he awoke, all things appeared to wear a different aspect. Multitudes of birds were joyously singing around him; the bright sun shone furtively through the trees, chequering the ground with golden trellis-work; and the sweet morning air seemed to bring new life and vigour to his spirit.

Earnest and ardent was the prayer which followed his waking, and he rose from his knees cheered, strengthened, and full of hope.

There is an ever alertness in the spirit at such an hour as this, which enables us both readily to suggest and promptly to decide on what we have to do. Before his homeward path was fully trod, Edward had completely settled in his own mind what his future line of conduct should be; and the cheerful air with which he apologised to Lucy, whom he found engaged in performing the task he had himself undertaken, for having lingered so long, made her bless the effect of the lengthened walk which she had wept to think of.

Their breakfast of milk and corn-bread was eaten hastily, for the children who attended their school were already seen approaching by more than one forest-path. Edward started up, saying,

"Lucy! will you undertake once more to-day to perform the work which rightfully belongs to me?—Will you keep school without me?"

"Most certainly I will, dearest Edward," she replied; "and if, as I guess, you have hit upon some promising expedient for the discovery of my poor Phebe, the double duty will seem very light."

Though these words implied no direct question, Edward felt that his sister expected to learn from him why he was about to absent himself; and his projects were as yet too vague to justify his stating them. After a moment's pause, however, he answered cheerfully,—
"I am going to Natchez, Lucy. There are, you know, four dollars destined to be expended in the purchase of some needful comforts for our establishment here. Now, I flatter myself that by means of a little store-gossip where I shall buy one thing, and a little more where I shall buy another, I may pick up all the the news stirring about the sale of negroes, which is as interesting a theme there as the barter of horses among jockeys. If Phebe has been sold since Wednesday, I think I shall find it out. Should this be the case, notwithstanding poor Peggy's grief, I shall be thankful, as your unfortunate favourite cannot be in worse hands than those of Colonel Dart and his detestable parasite Whitlaw. If, on the contrary, she has not been sold——" Here Edward paused, for he knew there was no comfort to be found in the alternative; but, after a moment's silence, he added, "If she has not been sold, I must endeavour to discover among our poor scattered flock, what has been her fate."

The importance of the errand as thus stated appeared to Lucy amply sufficient to account for her brother's walk to Natchez ; so, begging God's blessing upon him, she waved him off, and immediately sat down surrounded by a dozen boys and girls, and for six long hours devoted herself to the drudgery of teaching.

Edward had very faithfully explained a part of his business, but not the whole of it. It was indeed his purpose to discover, if possible, whether Phebe had been sold ; and he felt pretty certain that if this had happened, he should hear of it. But there was another and a dearer object which took him from his daily task, the hope of success in which gave elasticity to his step and a cheering warmth to his heart. He hoped at Natchez to hear of some occupation for Lucy which might shelter her from the danger he was deeply persuaded must soon fall upon himself. Could he succeed in this, all the painful vacillation he had recently suffered from, would, he well knew, leave him for ever ; and unchecked by fear or doubt of any kind, he should move steadily onward in the path he had traced for himself, and which, it was his earnest hope, would lead him at no very distant period to the point where he might pass from earth to heaven.

The distance to Natchez was about five miles ; and his sound nap in the forest, together with the hope that cheered him, caused him totally to forget his night of anxious watchfulness, and he found himself already looking down from the bright green slope on which stands this singular little town, equally blessed by nature and accursed by man, before he thought that he could have traversed half the distance.

Edward Bligh was not perhaps likely to be particularly successful in any business in which that style of colloquy usually denominated gossip was of necessity to make a part. But on this particular occasion he seemed inspired ; and in justice to the versatility of his powers, we must follow him in his talk as he rambled from store to store.

He first entered the wide, multifarious magazine of Mr. Monroe Vandumper. Though it was still early in the forenoon, there were no less than seven gentlemen of first-rate standing at Natchez indulging in the luxury of a cigar in and about the store. Three of these were perched in attitudes of undoubted ease, but rather questionable elegance, on bales or boxes placed outside the door ; and the other four were accommodated within it, in a manner evidently very satisfactory to themselves, but which would probably have been the last chosen by the inhabitants of any other country when engaged in a search after comfort.

One sat astride the counter ; a second had climbed to a third tier of woollen cloths set edgeways, apparently with no other object than to place his heels upon a shelf immediately above the door of entrance, so that by a judicious position of his head he was enabled to peep be-

tween his knees at every person who entered: the third sat deep sunk in an empty cask; while the fourth balanced himself on one leg out of four of a stool so placed as to permit his hitching his heels on the bar from which the shop-scales for coffee, sugar, and the like, were suspended over the counter.

Edward Bligh entered this store, intending that the purchase of a pound of coffee should lead the way to conversation either with the master of it, or his customers; and to facilitate this, he began by examining some "negro shoes," as they are called, which lay piled up half-way to the ceiling on one side of the magazine.

"Famous good shoes these, sir," said he to the only man who had not a cigar in his mouth, and whom he rightly judged to be the master, though he was earnestly occupied in reading a newspaper; capital make—what may be the damage, sir, of half-a-dozen of them?"

"That's according, I expect," replied Mr. Monroe Vandumper, without raising his eyes from the paper.

"Any particular news, sir, to-day?" resumed Edward, still continuing his examination of the negro-shoes.

"Umph! responded Mr. Vandumper; "what part of the country may you be from?—Back-woods away, I guess?"

"Just so, sir," replied Edward good-humouredly; "and it's quite a treat to come to Natchez and hear a little how the world goes. They're beginning to get feverish at New Orleans, I hear; but I hope you've nothing of the sort here as yet?"

"Do you want them shoes?" was the only answer vouchsafed to this inquiry by Mr. Monroe Vandumper; but Edward was too deeply interested in his object to be easily discouraged, and practising a little artifice which upon any less occasion he would have scorned, he took a handful of silver and copper money from his pocket, saying,

"We back-woodsmen, you know, sir, sometimes want more than we have dollars to pay for; and so I must see all I can, and choose for the best at last. 'Tis not exactly for myself I was inquiring about the shoes; but a neighbour of mine owns slaves, and it is about them that I was asking. And, now I think of it, he told me to inquire in the town here, if there has been any sale lately of young plantation blacks. He wants a girl that can wash and iron, and he would not stand for price. You have not seen any advertisement that you think might suit,—have you, sir?"

"That's considerable more than I can pretend to say. I see over many to remember much of any of 'em. But if you're looking after that commodity, you'd best step over the way by the market yonder, and you'll see advertisements stuck up everlasting there."

"Then that's jest what I'll do, sir; but first I'll trouble you to sell me a pound of coffee."

There was something in the sweet voice and gentle bearing of Edward that might have disarmed the churlishness of Cerberus; and its influence was felt not only by Mr. Monroe Vandumper himself, who actually laid aside his newspaper and set about weighing the coffee, but also by the elegant youth who was swinging his legs, one on each side the counter, and who having just finished his cigar, thus bespoke him:

"So you're after finding a smart smut—are you, my lad? Confound them all, say I! A fine rumpus they've been making at Oglevie's, down at the factory by the river, near Orlines. Why, if they haven't had the unbelievable impudence to be found with three tracts and a newspaper hid under one of the presses, may I never taste another cigar!—and two of the black devils absconded."

"Is that lately, sir?" said Edward.

"Five days ago, by G—d!" replied the young man, bringing his off-leg over the counter, and letting both hang down close to Edward's arm,—“only Monday last: and when the tracts were found, and stuck up burning upon the end of a cane, the whole gang set up such a howl that the foreman was right-down scared. The head clerk is a brother of my own, and he come up in a steamer yesterday to look at a lot of infernal trash of the same sort that was picked up in some cotton-grounds hereabouts. They hope to trace the white rascals they come from; and it's determined on all sides that they shall be tarred and burnt to death in the nearest market-place, let them be found where they may."

"That will be sport, at any rate!" observed the gentleman who was ensconced in the tub. "I would not mind having to flog a nigger or two out of their work for a week, to have the glory of seeing a saint burnt for it."

"I expect not, squire," said the balancing occupant of the stool: "it would pay any of us well for the loss of a dozen lazy black devils for a week, such a sight as that; and what's more, we must contrive to have it soon, or I calculate worse will follow. I'm positive certain that some of my black varment are being learned to read; and if that spreads, we'll have an insurrection and be murdered in our beds before we're a year older, as sure as the sun's in heaven."

"Massa want tree pound of baccy," said a fine-looking negro lad, approaching the receipt of custom with money for the purchase on his extended palm.

"You be d—d!" cried the young man on the counter, raising one of his feet as he spoke, and giving a sharp kick to the boy's hand, the money, which consisted of some copper and one or two small silver coins, was scattered far and wide on the floor.

Every white man in the store, save Edward, burst into a shout of laughter.

The young negro was in an agony of terror, and threw himself on the ground to recover the money; but his persecutor sprang from the counter, and assiduously collecting with his feet all the dust and rubbish on the floor to cover the coins, and occasionally kicking aside the hands of the boy as he sought to recover them, produced such a continuation of noisy merriment from the lookers-on, that the loungers outside the store were induced to enter, in order to inquire its cause.

No sooner was the jest made known, than the clamour, kickings, and buffetings became general; while the poor victim, suffering alike from present pain and the dread of future punishment, groaned aloud as his tormenters rolled him from one to the other beneath their feet. Drops of agony stood on Edward's brow. Could he for one moment have possessed a giant's strength, he would willingly have consented to die the next, might he but have used it to crush the wretches whose wanton, cowardly barbarity he was thus forced to witness. He turned to the door for air, and a moment's reflection closed his idle rage, while it strengthened a thousand-fold the steadfast purpose of his heart.

"You've got fine fun there, I expect—there's no denying that," said Mr. Vandumper, recovering at length from his fit of immoderate laughter; "but I'll be burnt if I don't make you pay for the baccy yourselves; so quit, and let the varment get up and do his errand."

The weather was warm, and the exercise they were engaged in violent, so that Mr. Vandumper's remonstrance was seconded by fatigue, and after one final kick from each, the sport ended, and the negro-boy was suffered to search among the dust for the money he had lost. He recovered it all except one small silver coin of the value of six cents. Having sought for this in vain for several minutes, he rose to his feet as if inspired by a sudden ray of hope, and with a look of innocent entreaty that might have moved a savage, said,

"You give me the baccy, massa, for this?" holding out the recovered money as he spoke.

Mr. Monroe Vandumper received the money and counted it.

"Now, isn't he an impudent varment?" he exclaimed, turning to the weary jesters, who were wiping their brows after the sport. "Isn't he a proper nigger?—You black dirt, you! d'ye think I'll trust such a one as you a picciune?"

Exhausted as they were, this sally produced another hearty laugh from the bystanders; while Edward, whose eyes were fixed upon the boy, saw him visibly tremble, and such an expression of terror took possession of his young features, that, thoughtless of the observations

it might provoke, he supplied the piece of money that was wanting, saying,

"Off with you, boy, with your *baccy*; and then I shall get my coffee, you see."

A glance of mingled surprise and rapture shot from the large eyes of the boy as he fixed them for a moment on the face of his benefactor; but Edward had the prudence to take no farther notice of him.

Mr. Vandumper whistled a bar or two of Yankee Doodle without speaking, weighed the three pounds of tobacco, tied it up, again counted the money that had been laid upon the counter, and then pushing the parcel to the young slave, dismissed him with saying, "Go and be flogged for wasting your master's time, you black imp!"

The boy gave one more speaking glance at Edward and departed. As he reached the door, the gentleman who was perched aloft close to it, and who had taken no farther part in the scene that had just passed than cheering the actors in it by shouts of laughter, stooping forward his head as the boy passed under him, contrived accurately to spit upon him as he went out. Once more the chamber rang with laughter; and then Edward received his pound of coffee and left the shop.

CHAPTER XV.

IN pursuance of the advice he had received, Edward Bligh proceeded to the market-place of Natchez; and there in truth he found, stuck conspicuously upon every point of vantage, unnumbered advertisements of the sale of negroes, singly, in couples, in families, and in gangs. But it appeared to him that there was not one which could include Phebe.

While earnestly occupied in this examination he was addressed by a voice quite unknown to him.

"You're looking for a bargain, are ye?—Yet somehow I calculate that you have no great notion neither about furnishing yourself with negroes. Maybe, mister, you are one of them what thinks slavery an abomination? Such folks are very plentiful, I hear, up the country now-a-days."

Edward turned to look at the person who spoke, and instantly recognised the hateful countenance of the man who from his lofty station in Vandumper's store had offered the last parting insult to the poor negro-boy.

A feeling of antipathy induced Bligh to turn away without answering;

but immediately recollecting the purpose for which he was at Natchez, he stepped back, after looking at an advertisement a few feet distant, and replied civilly,—

“It certainly is not on my own account, sir, that I am looking out.—My father owned many slaves, but he died a bankrupt, and I am too poor to own one.”

The stranger eyed him with evident curiosity.

“You are a stranger in Natchez, I think?”

“Yes, sir.”

“In what State was your father’s plantation?”

“My father’s farm was in Kentucky.”

“Kentucky?—They don’t know overmuch about managing niggers in Kentucky.—You are a farmer’s son, are you?—and your father died a bankrupt, did he? That must be inconvenient enough, no doubt.—And so you do a little in the agent way like,—is that it?”

“No, sir; the commission was quite accidental, because I was just coming to Natchez. My business now is keeping a day-school.”

“A school?—I thought you told us you come from the back-woods?”

“So I do, sir, though from no great distance; and there are many of the settlers round about who are glad to pay a few dollars to have their children kept out of mischief and taught to read.”

“Have you any negro-schools in Kentucky, my lad?”

“I believe not, sir.”

“But some of the niggers are uncommon knowing there, I am told. Did your father find it so with his?”

“I think not, sir. They most of them appeared profoundly ignorant.”

“And first-rate beastly stupid too, I take it. But maybe that’s not your notion concerning them? Maybe you expect they might be made into human creatures contrary to natur, if they had but a young saint or two to help ’em?”

There was something in the man’s manner from the first which led Edward to suspect that he had some sinister object in addressing him; and these last words not only confirmed this idea, but indicated plainly enough what the object was which the questioner had in view. This man had in truth, while seated aloft in the store, narrowly watched the speaking countenance of Bligh during the savage scene that passed there; and when at length he saw one whose dress was hardly above that of a labourer give money to extricate the negro-boy from his embarrassment, very little doubt remained on his mind that the pale but strikingly handsome young man who called himself a back-woodsman was neither more nor less than one of those who dared to enter a land of slavery with the gospel in his hand. That many such had

left behind them, as they quietly passed through that land, some traces of knowledge and of truth concerning both this world and that which is to come, was a fact of which Louisianans, in common with the inhabitants of all other slave-holding States, had recently become very painfully aware.

When first this danger threatened, the legislatures of most of these States contented themselves by framing laws, brief, peremptory, and severe, against all such as should be found engaged in teaching slaves the unlawful arts of reading and writing. But this slow, difficult, and, under these laws, dangerous process, was not the only one resorted to by the bold men who ventured to grapple with the slaveholders for the souls of their victims, though they had no power to redeem their bodies.

The sort of phrenetic rage which the discovery of this plot, as it was called, excited among the slave-holders, is now pretty generally known to the world by the acts to which it has led, and might really lead one to believe that the religious creed of these persons taught them to expect that their rights over the negro race were not to be forfeited like other mortal tenures by death, but would hold good to all eternity in the life to come, provided that no emancipation was obtained there for their slaves by the interference of meddling Christians while on earth.

Not very long before the period of which I write, some of the wealthiest planters in the neighbourhood of New Orleans met together in secret conclave to consult on the means most likely to check the growing evil. Some among them are said to have gone the length of proposing that State laws should be enacted, making the being caught in the fact of giving religious instruction to a slave a capital offence, in all cases to be punishable by death. But it was suggested that American citizens of the free States might possibly object to such power being given to any jurisdiction, for offences not recognised by the national law, over white men born in the Union, and under the protection of its stars and its stripes.

“What then was to be done? Were the landholders and merchants of the wealthiest part of the Union to have their dearest interests continually endangered by illegal efforts to make their slaves Christians? The canting, busy, mischief-making English, whose African association was for ever at work to stir up a ruinous strife in a prosperous and rival country, might pretend to be better and more philanthropic than their transatlantic offspring; but let some newly-invented process be set in action that should cause the horse, the ox, and the ass of Briton to turn and reason with his master for making him toil, what would the fierce Islanders say then?—Would they not rise and tear to atoms the agents in such a plot?”

Such were the reasonings, it is said, upon which many among the influential part of the slave-holding population of the United States acted, when it was tacitly resolved amongst them not to interfere whenever individual vengeance should be taken upon those suspected of holding religious intercourse with slaves, let that vengeance go what lengths it might.

The knowledge and belief that such a resolution had been secretly entered into by many possessing great power and influence was gradually gaining ground, producing consequences such as might easily have been predicted, and such in fact as it was intended they should produce.

The appetite for this species of chartered vengeance very naturally increased by what it fed on, and very many petty planters besides Mr. Giles Hogstown, who had now fixed himself on Edward Bligh, felt as much gratification in getting scent of a missionary, or tracking a Christian traveller, as a bloodhound shows when he comes upon the trace of his prey.

Though by no means fully aware of the extent to which this system of licensed outrage was carried, Edward knew enough of it to feel certain that this man's questions boded him no good; but as in this case no present danger threatened either Lucy or any of his sable flock, his spirit rose to meet and baffle it, and to Hogstown's allusion to "saints" he replied with a smile, and looking him full in the face—

"But where are the young saints to come from, sir? I don't fancy we can expect any more saints on earth just at present."

"You hail from Kentucky, my lad, don't you?" replied Hogstown, twisting the quid in his mouth, and at the same time squirting forth its juice with an expressive jerk.

"Yes, sir," replied Edward, preserving his steady unembarrassed air; "and a very fine country it is. — Do you happen to know it, sir?"

"I know enough of it to say that no whey-faced canting vagabonds had ought to come therefrom. They most generally rises very unaccountable fine fellows there, who are most times up to a thing or two; but it's likely enough that, with all their gouging and fun, they may learn something new if they send out some strolling scouts Natchez way. We arn't to be beat, nor scared, nor bamboozled by any that stands between earth and heaven,—mind that, my lad."

So saying, he turned down a street at the corner of which they were standing, leaving Edward considerably at a loss to comprehend the meaning of his parting address.

He suspected indeed that he was threatened, but he knew not with what; and more determined than ever to separate himself from Lucy,

he crossed the market to a store that exhibited in its window ready-made caps, hats, and sundry garments for children.

"Do you happen to want a very handy young woman for needle-work?" said he as he entered, and almost before he had seen the face of the person he addressed.

This was an extremely beautiful young woman who stood behind the counter, and whose delicate complexion had a slight shade of that peculiar tinge which marks the quadroon in Louisiana, but which would have gained her in Europe the reputation of being the most beautiful brunette in the world.

"Yes, sir, we do," was the reply; "we want several."

Edward's blood mounted to his temples as he looked at her. Beautiful, graceful, elegant, and gentle as she was, he dared not place his sister near her. Let her moral character be what it might, disgrace must of necessity be coupled with her name. Her remarkable beauty made it certain that she must be addressed with the most brutal and unchecked licentiousness by every dissolute fellow that approached her. From this no possible degree of purity and discretion could secure her, for she was of the race whom all men are permitted to insult. Lucy's present situation, perilous as it might soon become, was still infinitely better than any protection this unfortunate being could bestow; and Edward stood silent and embarrassed before her, at a loss how to leave the shop after such an opening without betraying the reason for it.

But the poor quadroon understood him without his entering into any explanation.

"Is the young lady a relation of yours, sir?" said she.

"She is my sister."

"Then I think, sir, you had better inquire at Mrs. Shepherd's, three doors below. She has a great deal of work, and there would be no objection to your sister's being with her."

A bright blush mounted to her eyes as she spoke; but she smiled as she returned his parting bow. It was that soft, melancholy smile, however, which seems peculiar to her race, and it brought tears into Edward's eyes.

He followed her instructions, and entering the shop of Mrs. Shepherd, repeated his inquiry.

"A handy young woman?—why yes, maybe I do," was the satisfactory reply, but uttered by lips which nature had denied the power to smile, and in a voice that was in harsh discordance with the sweet tones of the quadroon.

Edward felt all this strongly enough, poor fellow; but it was no time to dwell on smiles or silver sounds; and feeling this more strongly still, he civilly proceeded to state the merits and qualifications of his sister.

"Is she a beauty, young man?" gruffly inquired the grim high priestess of this temple of fashion, fixing her rude eyes on Edward's handsome features. "If she favours you, I don't think she'll suit me; I don't approve of beauties."

Again Edward's blood mounted to his forehead, but with a feeling widely different from that which last propelled it there. He conquered the rebellion, however, that was rising at his heart, and replied meekly,

"My sister, madam, is a very quiet, modest-looking young woman, and would, I am sure, endeavour in all ways to give you satisfaction."

"It's difficult to know.—Gals are unaccountable plagues.—What would she ask, too, over and above her board and lodging?"

"She would be happy to come to you for a trial, madam, on very reasonable terms,—just enough to enable her to dress with propriety."

"Well, I expect I may try her.—Where does she bide?"

"She has been living with me in the country, and she is there still."

"Living with you?—Has she no parents? How am I to know that she is not your miss?"

This was too much, and Edward turned to leave the store. But probably there was something in the *ad libitum* nature of the arrangement proposed agreeable to the pecuniary taste of Mrs. Shepherd, for she prevented his departure by saying sharply—

"You'd better stop, young man;—you may go farther and fare worse. If you're a brother, and a good brother, you won't think the worse of the place because I am careful who I takes into it."

There was truth in this, though the manner of it was detestable; so once more subduing his feelings, he turned back and said calmly,

"I am indeed a brother, madam, and one that would die rather than expose my sister to danger of any kind; but I have not been used to hear her suspected; and——"

"Well, well, no harm's done; I'm willing to give your sister a trial.—What's her name?"

"Bligh,—Miss Lucy Bligh."

"And when is she to come? She isn't to stump it, I suppose?—have you any waggons your way?"

"Oh yes; there will no difficulty about that. I can bring her to you next market-day, if that will suit you?"

"Next market-day?—why that's four days, and we stified with work here. However, the waggons will accommodate [then maybe, and she will have to wash and stitch a spell, I expect, to fix herself.—So market-day let it be,—and that's all said."

Edward took the hint and disappeared. He was comforted—certainly he was greatly comforted at having thus succeeded in the object next his heart; but it was with a pang he could scarcely conquer that

he thought of his meek, gentle Lucy, who through all her troubles had never yet received a harsh word from any human being, given up to the power and the temper of the woman he had left.

The sight of Mr. Giles Hogstow, whom at this moment he saw on the opposite side of the market-place evidently watching him, went farther perhaps to reconcile him to the deed he had done than anything else he could have encountered. Once more he felt certain he was right, and immediately turned all his thoughts to the little details necessary to prepare Lucy for the change in her position.

Mrs. Shepherd's hint about "stitching and fixing" was not lost on the thoughtful brother, and he immediately determined to dedicate the money he had brought with him to the purchase of a gown, *et cætera*, for his Lucy.

He remembered of old that in the days of his Lexington splendour the finest shops were ever accounted the dearest; he therefore prudently determined to quit the gayer part of the town and to penetrate into the humbler quarter, where he might hope to find bargains that should suit his purse.

Fate seemed to favour him. A low-browed door admitted him to a well-filled little store, from among the treasures of which he easily selected what he flattered himself would answer the purpose required.

While making his purchases, he observed that the magazine he had selected for them was sufficiently humble to receive negro customers, for more than one entered for a cent's worth of snuff or tobacco while he was there. Perceiving that the woman of the shop condescended also to gossip with them as she took their money, he ventured to join the conversation by asking if they could tell him whether a handsome young negro girl called Phebe had been sold at Natchez within the last few days?

The question was one which immediately commanded the attention of his auditors.

"Phebe?" said one. "No, massa—no Phebe sold this week at market. I hab the cat cause I bede see 'em all done sold. No Phebe 'mongat 'em, massa."

"Handsome?" cried another; "der hab not bin a handsome nigger gal sold in Natchez market since my Sylvia. No, massa, no handsome gal this week."

This latter testimony might have had but little weight without the former; but both together, joined with the absence of everything resembling an advertisement of her on the walls of the market-house, convinced him that the poor girl had not been sold.

Edward now turned his thoughts homeward; but, despite his nearly exhausted purse, he entered a baker's store to purchase a roll before

he set off towards the forest. Though pressed by hunger at the moment he did so, he would not eat the morsel then, for he remembered a clear brook that he should pass in his way, beside which he could rest himself, quench his ardent thirst, and, in short, double the luxury of his banquet.

As he quitted the baker's store, he was somewhat startled to meet again the deep-set eye of Hogstown glaring at him from the door of a whisky-store opposite. He remembered, however, that a few days would see his sister in safety; and solaced by this conviction, he walked out of the town little mindful whether Mr. Giles Hogstown watched him or not.

CHAPTER XVI.

"POOR LUCY! how will she bear it?" was an exclamation that escaped Edward Bligh's lips almost as soon as he had fairly quitted the busy suburbs of Natchez, and found himself alone in the wide forest that surrounds it.

It was a question which had never occurred to him as long as the separation was doubtful; but now, now that it was all fixed and settled,—now that he had spent almost their last dollar in obtaining a dress in which to send her from him, the fear that he should have to witness very bitter sorrow on her part, weighed heavily on his spirits, and his pace slackened and his step moved languidly as he thought of it.

He had quite forgotten his little loaf, and the repose he had promised himself to take while he ate it, when he at length reached the pretty spot he had fixed upon for the purpose. The sight of it reminded him both of his need of refreshment, and of the means of taking it, which were within his reach; and though no longer feeling as light-hearted as when he projected the repast, he sat down on a bright white stone beside the little brook as he intended, and having first refreshed himself by a copious draught of its fresh and delicious water, he prepared to eat his loaf, when he was startled by the apparition of a negro head looking earnestly at him from a thick bush of cane-brake on the other side of the stream.

At first, the glance that regarded him seemed a furtive one, and some caution was taken to conceal the person from whom it came; but in the next moment a tall young negro burst from the covert, and springing by a strong effort across the brook, fell trembling and exhausted at Edward's feet.

He was dreadfully emaciated, and appeared so reduced in strength, that when Edward stretched out his hand and attempted to raise him, the poor fellow, though he evidently endeavoured to second the effort, was utterly unable to do so, and remained prostrate and panting on the earth.

Edward dipped his hand in the running water and sprinkled him freely with it. The negro opened his eyes, which had closed heavily as he fell, and looking up in the face that was gazing on him with an expression of tender pity, but with no symptom of recognition, he exclaimed,

“ Oh, Master Edward ! do you not know me ? ”

Famine and fatigue had changed the voice less than the features, for he was now known in an instant.

“ Cæsar ! my poor Cæsar ! ” cried Edward, wringing his attenuated hand, “ what can have happened to bring you to this miserable condition ? ”

“ I am a runaway slave, Master Edward, ” replied the young man, shuddering as he spoke the fearful words, “ and I have eaten nothing but wild berries for the last five days. ”

The first impulse was naturally to give him the bread that lay on the moss at his side. This was done most cautiously and tenderly by Edward, who fed him with little morsels dipped in the stream as carefully as a mother would have ministered to her babe. But, this first and most imperious call answered, the next movement was that of terror at the dreadful risk of discovery that both were exposed to. The sun was not yet set, and within a quarter of a mile of the spot where they stood was the dwelling of a hunter well known to Edward, whose fortune would be made at a single stroke could he only see and give notice at Natchez of the vicinity of the poor exhausted Cæsar.

For the present, nothing better could be devised by either of them, than for the negro to creep on his belly beneath the almost impervious covert of the bushes at a hundred yards' distance from the path. His renovated strength sufficed for this, and there Edward left him, assuring him that he might go to sleep in safety, as the spot was too near a human habitation to leave any fear of wolves, and promising to return at midnight with the best nourishment he could procure, that his activity might be sufficiently restored to enable him to search a hiding-place of greater safety.

Edward Bligh pursued his way home in a state of the most painful anxiety. During the few moment's conversation they held together, he had learned from Cæsar that he was one of the slaves escaped from Oglevie's factory ; and the suspicion which had glanced across his mind when he heard of the tracts, that the delinquent might possibly be his own valued and faithful Cæsar, was thus unhappily confirmed.

Among many pressing causes of uneasiness, the difficulty of concealing this unfortunate young man, and saving him from the fate that inevitably awaited him if discovered, now became the most urgent ; but weary and wayworn, he reached his home before his invention had suggested anything that promised even probable success.

He found Lucy anxiously awaiting him, and a supper of such comfortable aspect provided, that his first idea was that he would return immediately to convey it to his starving protégé.

A young farmer who passed whistling before the door at this moment reminded him, however, that the hour of darkness and silence was not yet come ; so setting apart, to the great surprise of the wondering Lucy, considerably more than half the tempting steaks she had provided, he sat down beside her to partake the remainder.

How much, how very much he had to tell her !—and where should he begin ? The condition of poor Cæsar was the thing most freshly impressed upon his memory, and examining cautiously on all sides that none were near enough to overhear him, he related it to her exactly as it had become known to him.

She was greatly agitated. Cæsar had been valued by the whole family for his many excellent qualities ; but Lucy loved him for Phebe's sake still more than for his own ; and when she remembered the tender and innocent affection which had existed between them from early childhood, and the agony the poor girl would feel when she learned his situation, she wept bitterly.

It was immediately agreed between the brother and sister, that he should every night be supplied with the means of sustenance by them. This part of the arrangement was easy enough ; but where should they conceal him ? How could they hope to find means of eluding the search which would most assuredly be made for him, and in which every white inhabitant of the country except themselves would join heart and hand ?

Some moments of silent meditation followed the fair statement of these very difficult questions by Edward, and then Lucy broke the silence by saying,

“ Edward ! a thought has come into my head that may be worth nothing ; yet the case seems so desperate, that I had better tell you what it is, in case by possibility you may turn it to account. You set off this morning, dear brother, in the hope of doing some important business by means of the town gossip, while I, staying at home, had a huge packet of country gossip brought me, quite unsought on my part, I assure you, but from which I think it is just possible we may extract something profitable to our poor Cæsar.”

“ Indeed !—That is the last thing I should expect, Lucy, from any gossip within reach of Fox's clearing. Fox's wife's brother owns a

slave; and the instant the abomination comes within the limits of a man's kindred, if it be only to a cousin's cousin, you are sure to hear them all join the hoop and cry after every runaway negro mentioned in their presence, as if the property of the whole family were at stake. —But tell me what you have heard."

"Nothing certainly to disprove the truth of your observation. I should be sorry to trust the safety of Cæsar to the tender mercies of Mrs. Fox, who seldom misses an opportunity of offering her testimony to the 'unaccountable ignorance of them stupid niggers what genteel people is forced to have wait upon 'em.' But my gossip did not come from her: it was that decent body Mrs. Martin, little Rosa's mother, who gave me the information that I wish to turn to Cæsar's profit. She brought the child to school this morning, that she might explain something about the work she was about; and of course I made her sit down, and so forth. She asked me, by way of making conversation, I suppose, if I knew the German family called Steinmark, who own the large farm known by the name of Reichland. I told her I had heard them named as very rich people, but knew nothing more about them. 'My!' she exclaimed, 'I wonder you never heard tell of their beautiful daughter!—why, she's the talk of the country, but so proud that she won't deign to speak a word to anybody. The brothers, at least the miller, is a very clever free-spoken man, and rich too, they do say, unaccountable: and now they are all mad with joy because the eldest son is come back from Philadelphia richer than all the rest. But the thing I was going to speak of was, the unaccountable wonder that, with all the dollars that's talked of among 'em, there is not one of the whole kit what owns a slave!'—This, Edward, as nearly as I can recollect it, was Mrs. Martin's harangue; and it created a feeling of satisfaction at knowing that there was at least one household near us composed of right-thinking Christians. Do you think it possible that you could introduce yourself to this family, lead them to talk of the besetting sin of the beautiful country in which they have fixed themselves, and, if encouraged by their sentiments and manner of speaking, trust them at once with poor Cæsar's secret, and implore their help to conceal him? Do you think it would be possible to do this?"

"Lucy, I do," was Edward's prompt reply; and after meditating a moment he added,—"It appears to me almost certain that a wealthy family in Louisiana, carrying on extensive concerns without slaves, must do so upon principle; and if this be the case, they will help us. —Do not doubt it, love!—let us thank Heaven for this most timely accident!"

Lucy did thank Heaven; and so delighted did she feel at the idea of Cæsar's probable escape, and the exceeding happiness she should convey to Phebe by telling her that he was safe and well, that she almost

forgot how completely the fate of the unfortunate girl was still enveloped in mystery. Her first words on seeing Edward had been to ask if Phebe were sold, and his almost positive negative suggested the idea that she must be still near them.

"My poor dear Phebe!" exclaimed the tender-hearted Lucy, who, though still fancy-free herself, appeared quite able to understand the effect of love on others; "she did so dearly love him!—I must see him, Edward, if only to tell Phebe that I have done so. It is quite dark now—may we not go to him?"

There was one piece of intelligence which Edward had to communicate that he had not yet touched upon, and it was of a nature which, though pregnant with satisfaction to himself, he almost feared to mention; but Lucy must hear it, and that directly, or how would the "stitching and fixing" be accomplished? He thought that he should be less of a coward if Lucy's sweet face were concealed by darkness as she listened to him, and he therefore readily acceded to her offer of accompanying him to the spot where he had left Cæsar.

He persuaded her, however, to wait for another hour or two, that no belated loiterer might be likely to cross their path; and then, furnished with a small basket containing every comfort their scanty means could furnish, they set forth.

The moon was now very nearly at the full, and gave them perhaps a clearer light than they desired; but this trifling addition to a danger which at this hour they thought could not be great, occasioned them but little uneasiness. An exclamation from Lucy as they quitted their dark room, upon the glorious brightness that greeted them, was answered by her thoughtful brother with an observation that the deepest darkness would perhaps suit them better; but after this they alluded to the danger no more, and perhaps almost unconsciously "blessed the useful light" which rendered this walk so unlike many which they had taken during the last fortnight to Peggy's hut.

One must have seen the effect of moonlight in a half-cleared forest-path in this southern climate, to conceive any idea of its beauty. The striking illustration of "ebon and ivory" that has been so beautifully applied to this species of light, is hardly strong enough to convey an idea of its strength and power there. The flood of silver that bathes every object where trees are not, and the solemn darkness that dwells unconquerable where they are, surpasses anything that more temperate latitudes can show.

Lucy seemed inclined to bask in the moonshine, and chose the centre of the open glade by which their walk commenced, as if to enjoy its brilliance more fully; but this suited not the tone of poor Edward's feelings, and drawing her arm within his, he led her gently into the shade.

"Dearest Lucy!" he said, "do you remember that I was once stern enough to say that it was your duty to obey me? And do you remember, too, how sweetly you answered that you knew it, and would never cease to remember it?"

"Well, Edward! and suppose I do? Have you any very terrible proof of my sincerity to propose to me?"

"I fear I have, my love;—but you must not blame me, Lucy; and do not, for God's sake, dearest,—do not increase the difficulties which surround us, by showing disinclination to adopt the measure I have decided on for you."

The heart of the poor girl at once divined that he was about to propose they should separate.

"Edward! Edward!" she exclaimed, "think well before you decide upon leaving me;—think well whether I shall have strength to support the life I now lead without you."

"What I have arranged for you is nothing like this, dearest Lucy; but, to speak to you at once with the frankness you so well deserve, I must say that our remaining together at this very critical moment would be fatal to the great object to which I have solemnly consecrated my existence. I cannot do what I ought to do while you are with me. But think not that I am therefore less exposed to danger. On the contrary, I am persuaded that did I feel myself perfectly a free agent, and had the power of moving from one quarter to another, I might live among these unhappy people for years, of which no week, no day should pass unmarked by the approach of some of them towards their God, while I might remain unchallenged and unknown even in the centre of New Orleans."

"New Orleans! Are you going to New Orleans, Edward?—and at this season!"

"Oh no, Lucy! I have no such idea, I assure you. On the contrary, my intention is to remain at our present quarters, and to pursue the same occupation; while you, at the distance of a few miles only, shall be safely pursuing an employment less fatiguing, I hope, but certainly more profitable, and which will afford you the power of meeting me every Sabbath morning at sunrise on the road from Natchez, when I will lead you home to breakfast, and we will pass the holy day in prayer and peace."

"Ah! my poor Edward!" replied Lucy, weeping, "you have thought more of me than of yourself in this. How will your evenings pass without me?"

"Delightfully, peacefully, fearlessly, Lucy; for I shall have done my duty. But you do not ask to what labour I have pledged my little girl?—Are you not anxious to know whether you are to be governess in the family of some magnificent creole, with the task of imparting

activity to all her offspring? or to superintend the agreeable establishment of a Natchez boarding-house?"

"I do not much think," replied Lucy, almost recovering her smiles, "that you have pledged me to either one or the other. But tell me, cruel Edward! what is it I shall have to occupy me when I can plan and plot for your comfort no longer?"

Edward then gave her a detailed account of the engagement he had entered into, confessed that the aspect of Mrs. Shepherd was not very inviting, but endeavoured to console himself and her by talking of the future, and dwelling upon a hope he had often before mentioned, that he might some day find means to take her with him to the coast of Liberia.

Lucy answered only by a heavy sigh; but she made no farther attempt at remonstrance, and listened with gratitude to the account he gave of his thoughtful purchases for her.

By the time this theme was fully discussed, they had reached the spot where Edward had left the weary and exhausted negro. He had taken the bearings of the thicket which concealed him too accurately to feel any doubt about the place; but the signals he gave of their approach remained unanswered, nor could they penetrate sufficiently into the matted covert to enable them to decide whether the object of their search were concealed there or not.

Cæsar had made his entry into it much as a snake might have done—a mode of conveying the person which neither of his friends had yet acquired; so that having walked around and into the thicket as nearly as possible, and used their voices fully as loud as it was safe to do, they began to fear either that he had been surprised and taken away, or that for some reason or other he had sought another place of concealment.

For a moment after this fear was expressed by Edward, they both stood perfectly still as if meditating what course to pursue; and then in the perfect silence Lucy fancied that she distinguished a sound like the heavy breathing of one asleep. Her brother listened at her bidding, and soon became convinced that she was right; but how to penetrate to the asylum the sleeper had chosen, or even to guess exactly where it was, he knew not.

At length it was decided between them to cut a long stout branch from a tree, and by the aid of this to set to work on poor Cæsar as it is usual to do when endeavouring to dislodge a rat from a hole. The experiment happily succeeded, and a gleam of moonlight that shot through a lucky aperture in the trees was caught, and reflected so vividly by Cæsar's eyes as he slowly emerged from his lair, that an European might have been strangely startled at the effect produced.

The next moment was one of rapture to poor Cæsar. The sight of

Lucy was an unexpected joy, and he testified his devotion to her rather like an Eastern than a Western slave, for he literally kissed the hem of her garment again and again, and, spite of the weakness of his famished state, wearied not of repeating—

“Miss Lucy! Oh, blessed Miss Lucy! Beautiful, blessed Miss Lucy!”

Tears flowed plentifully from the eyes of both; but Edward interfered to stop this excess of enervating feeling, for he knew that the poor fellow would have need of courage and energy to escape the perils that surrounded him.

The restorative contents of the basket were produced, and the gay enjoyment with which the poor negro despatched them was a painful contrast to the anxiety of his more thoughtful friends.

Timidly and tenderly he inquired for Phebe; and so needful did Edward think it to sustain, and not depress his spirits, that he only told him in return that she was the property of a neighbouring planter, and that they often saw her, without hinting at her recent disappearance, or at any of the peculiar miseries of her situation.

After an hour passed in thus comforting the poor runaway, Edward and Lucy prepared to depart; and as the thicket had proved a safe hiding-place, and contained, as Cæsar assured them, a very soft bed of leaves to sleep on, they strongly recommended his patiently remaining within it, promising that the following night should replenish the little store they left with him, and that the interval should be passed in endeavouring to learn what would be the safest course for him to pursue. Having seen him ensconced, they took their departure; and their homeward walk was beguiled by the discussion of various plans for becoming acquainted with the rich German family who employed no slaves.

CHAPTER XVII.

NOTWITHSTANDING the many ingenious devices suggested and canvassed that night, when the following morning came, Edward Bligh told his sister that he had determined upon using none of them, but intended simply to present himself to their wealthy neighbour, and, unless he saw something in his manner that was discouraging, to state the case of Cæsar at once, and ask his assistance in concealing him till the first heat of pursuit should be over.

Edward set forth accordingly; and the day being Sunday, Lucy consented to accompany him for a part of the way. The distance did not

exceed three miles ; and rather than lose the pleasure of his company on the return,—a pleasure, as she said, that would soon become very rare,—she placed herself under a tree at no great distance, though perfectly concealed, from the house, and there awaited his return.

Edward boldly entered the premises, and requesting to see “the master,” was ushered into the common sitting-room of the Steinmark family, which has been before described.

Frederick Steinmark was, as usual, occupied at the upper end of the apartment with a book ; and, as usual too on this day of rest, his still beautiful wife was surrounded by her sons ; the circle being now augmented by Fritz, and a young friend and countryman, who had accompanied him from Philadelphia.

It was impossible to mistake the figure of the master. The high forehead, now nearly deserted by the light curls that formerly covered it—the slight contraction of the brow, which denoted at once age and thought, distinguished him sufficiently from the bright young faces which occupied the other end of the apartment.

Edward approached him, and said—

“ Mr. Steinmark, I believe ? ”

It must, I suppose, be allowed as a defect, or a weakness, or, at any rate, as a peculiarity in Frederick Steinmark, that his first impulse since his arrival in America upon the approach of any stranger, was to look towards such members of his family as were present with him, as a hint that they should come forward to relieve him from what indeed he never was heard to complain of, but which they all knew was the greatest annoyance that could beset him.

Upon this occasion, as usual, the same summons that caused him to raise his eyes from his book, directed them towards his sons ; but this glance of warning given, he next turned his eyes upon his guest, and immediately laid aside the volume on a table near him.

Hermann, with his usual promptitude, had already obeyed the look, and was by his side ; but Edward, who had perceived the joyous party from which he came, took courage for the sake of Cæsar’s secret, and, almost unconscious of Hermann’s civil salutation, continued to address his father :

“ May I take the liberty, Mr. Steinmark, of begging to speak to you alone ? ”

Such a request would in general have fallen more heavily on the ear of Frederick Steinmark than the announcement of the visit of a wolf or hurricane ; but, somewhat to Herman’s surprise, he now rose with alacrity from his chair, and led the way to a small room on the opposite side of the entrance, followed by Edward.

Could their historian do justice to the character of Frederick Steinmark, or to the countenance of Edward Bligh, this deviation from the

usual habits of the former would create no surprise, for never did features more speakingly proclaim gentleness, intelligence, and refinement than those of Edward.

When the door of the little room was closed upon them, and they were both seated, the young American once more raised his eyes to the face of his host; and if any doubt remained on his mind as to the security with which he might tell him ALL, that glance removed it.

"When you know my business, sir," said Edward; "I think you will forgive the freedom I have taken, and am about to take."

"I am quite sure of it, sir, let that freedom be what it may," replied the German.

"You have a large estate here," resumed Edward, "and I am told that you own no slave. May I not believe that this is a proof of your condemning slavery?"

"I would have it a proof to all men, that I abhor it from my soul," replied Frederick Steinmark with energy.

"Thank God!" replied poor Edward fervently. "It is long since I have heard such words."

"But why should they affect you so strongly, my young friend?" demanded Steinmark.

"I will tell you, sir. If you abhor slavery, you must be touched with compassion for those who are its victims. One of these, a young man of my own age, and whom I have known familiarly from my birth,—one of the most guiltless, faithful, and affectionate of human beings,—is at this moment exposed to all the fearful danger that threatens a slave who has run from his master. The reasons of his doing so, I could explain much to his honour did I not fear to intrude on your kind patience. But I have no means whatever of concealing him: he is at present lying hid in the forest at a few miles' distance, and unless I can discover some shelter for him soon, I cannot hope that he will escape the pursuit which will, before it ceases, leave no thicket unexplored."

Steinmark listened with the most earnest attention; the tale had for the present effectually cured his absence of mind.

"If my premises can afford protection to the poor fellow, be very sure he shall have it. But may I, without your believing impertinent curiosity to be my motive, ask you, sir, how it happens that you, an American, an inhabitant of Louisiana, and, if I mistook you not, formerly the owner of this young negro, should feel thus keenly the misery and the sin produced by this dreadful system? I have been fifteen years in the country, and you are the first man from whom I have heard such sentiments."

Edward hesitated a moment, not from any averseness to disclose his situation and the circumstances which led to it to the man before him,

but rather from a fear of being beguiled by the interest expressed in the gentle eye that rested on him into becoming too tediously his own biographer.

"Let me not distress you," said Steinmark hastily, remarking this hesitation, and believing from it that there were circumstances it might be painful to disclose. "I feel that my question was unauthorised. Let us rather revert."

"Mr. Steinmark!" interrupted Edward with vivacity, "it is long, very long, since I have had the gratification of speaking to any one, except my young sister, to whom I could venture to express my feelings. If I now hesitate to answer you, it is because I fear that I may be led to speak of myself too much. Without this fear, it would indeed be a comfort and consolation to tell you what I am, and why I am no better."

"We seem, my young friend," returned Steinmark, with his own peculiar smile of irresistible sweetness, "to have more than one peculiarity in common. It is long, very long too, since I have encountered a human being out of my own family to whom I could speak with freedom; and now we have met, I should be sorry to think the acquaintance was likely to end."

Edward held out his hand without speaking. At that moment, his voice could not have served to express his feelings so well as his action. He was fully understood, however; and these two very shy men, of different ages and of different nations, felt mutually that they were far advanced towards intimacy and friendship.

"May I then come to you again?" said Edward cheerfully; "I cannot indulge myself now;—I have left my sister waiting for me in the forest, and she will be most painfully anxious to hear the result of my petition for shelter in behalf of poor Cæsar. Shall I tell her that you have promised to conceal him?"

"You may, indeed. But shall we not see your sister?—why not request her to join us?"

From this, however, Edward excused himself. He had as yet made no acquaintance with the kind Mary and her lovely daughter; and the group of gay-looking young men he had caught sight of would, he thought, positively frighten Lucy. It was therefore settled that Edward should now take his leave, and return about midnight with Cæsar, leaving to the morrow the renewal of the conversation which had so much interested both.

"And your name, my friend?" said Frederick Steinmark, holding out his hand.

"Edward Bligh."

"Farewell, then, till to-night. I will myself, and myself alone, await you at the gate through which you passed in coming to the house.

"When you know us all, perhaps you may increase the number of your confidants."

Edward took his leave, and carried with him such a degree of love, admiration, and reverence for the man he left, as only the young, unworn, and pure of heart can feel upon an acquaintance of half-an-hour's standing. Nevertheless, not all the ripened wisdom of a Nestor could have enabled him to form a truer judgment. Such beings as Frederick Steinmark are not given lavishly to the world; yet many may exist, perhaps, who do not bear so legible an index on their brow of the treasure within. Happy are those who, if destined to encounter one such in their passage through the world, meet it in the first glow of youthful feeling, when no misgivings of the delightful impulse, which renders up the heart, checks and chills the offering!

This happiness was Edward's, and he enjoyed it too with the keenness of one to whom happiness is rare; yet there was a moisture in his eye as he turned from the threshold which might have been mistaken for the symbol of sorrow. The first half of the distance which divided him from Lucy was traversed in a sort of trance: new hopes, new affections, were awakened in his bosom, and all the heavy care that pressed upon him were for those few delicious moments totally forgotten. Then came the idea of his sister, and the pleasure of relating his success: but with this came also the remembrance of their approaching separation, and the melancholy thought that poor Lucy, toiling with her needle in Mrs. Shepherd's store at Natchez, would be as forlorn and miserable as if no such being as Frederick Steinmark existed in the world.

His pace slackened as he thought of this; and his last steps were taken so languidly, and the expression of his countenance as he approached her was so sad, that as she rose to meet him she exclaimed,

"Alas! Edward, I see that you have failed! God help him, poor fellow!—his fate in this world is sealed."

This was uttered with such rapid vehemence, that the "No! no! no!" of Edward was unheeded, and the poor girl burst into tears.

"Why, what a kill-joy face must mine be, Lucy, that the sight of me, even when I bring you the most happy tidings, should throw you into such complete despair! I have not failed, Lucy: on the contrary, I have found a safe asylum for Caesar—if any can be safe,—and for myself a friend such as I never hoped to meet on earth. This Frederick Steinmark, Lucy, is a man that one might fancy was created to make a link between earth and heaven!"

"Edward!" ejaculated his sister with a feeling almost like dismay at a burst of such unwonted vehemence from one so calm—at least on all themes but one; "how strongly wild that sounds, when speaking of a man whom you have known perhaps for forty minutes! But, if

he will save Cæsar, I too will love and honour him,—though scarcely with such high-flown ecstasy as yours."

Edward answered her reproof with a bright and happy smile—

"You know not what you talk of, my dear child. You can have no idea of the being that lives yonder, enshrined in the forest, and hid as it should seem from all the world : his eye, his smile, his voice, his words—"

As he thus vividly brought the image of his new acquaintance before his mind's eye, his memory suddenly recalled to him the looks, words, and actions he had witnessed the day before in Mr. Monroe Vandum-per's store.

"God of the universe!" he exclaimed with awe, "inscrutable are thy ways! All, all have immortal souls!—All in thine own image!—Oh! how defaced, deformed!—Can they be recognised?—Can we believe them of the same race?—What is the tincture of the skin, compared to this deep-dyed deformity?—deep to the centre, to the inmost soul!"

Lucy walked beside him, her arm locked in his; but she felt that these words were not addressed to her. It was not the first time that she had heard her brother break forth thus in soliloquy, as if his mind started aside from the theme on which they were conversing; and whenever this happened, a vague terror, lest sorrow might at last shake his noble understanding, shot through her heart. But the fear was as transitory as the cause of it, and left no trace of which she was conscious on her mind, except perhaps a sort of quiet firmness that she cherished there, as a fund of strength in time of need, that might make stand against the rash enthusiasm that he often manifested.

Having thus given vent, perhaps unconsciously, to the thoughts that were at work within him, Edward walked on in silence. Lucy had no courage to interrupt his meditation, but she sighed deeply.

"Forgive me, dearest love!" he exclaimed, "for suffering my thoughts to wander from Steinmark and from you, to Natchez, and some of the vilest beings that inhabit it. Shall I tell you, Lucy, why it was that when I approached you laden with good news, I looked as if I were the bearer of all that was dismal?"

"I wish you would;—I cannot understand it."

"It was because I have found a blessing that you cannot share with me if you keep the engagement I have made for you at Natchez."

"God bless you, dearest Edward!—but do not always let your thoughts and cares be fixed on me. I shall do very well; and should I find it otherwise, you know we have already settled that I should return to you. Meanwhile, I trust that this good German who has so enchanted you will prove a useful friend to you as well as to Cæsar."

"Ay, Lucy, that's the point. Not for myself, however;—I want

no man's aid :—but you, Lucy ;—might I not hope to gain his friendship and protection for you ?”

“ In what way, Edward ?”

“ Nay, I hardly know. He seems to have many sons ; and if they all live at home, it would be unseemly to ask an abode for you with them.”

“ Ask an abode for me, and with total strangers, Edward ?—Indeed I shall prefer your former plan. Your sour Mrs. Shepherd has no terrors for me. I sew with great rapidity ; and that will win me favour in her sight. All this I can agree to readily : but I pray you, Edward, do not consign me to the charity of strangers.”

“ Strangers !—Steinmark is no stranger to me, Lucy.”

“ But, my dear Edward,” she replied anxiously, “ remember how much you have already asked of him. Though his ample premises and the respect always shown to wealth may enable him for a while to conceal Cæsar, it is not the less certain that he runs great risk in doing so. Remember the outrages that have been committed at New Orleans against a native creole, as wealthy probably as your new German friend, and for a less offensive act than concealing a runaway slave. Mr. Steinmark braves all this at your request ;—pray do not tax this new-made friendship any farther.”

“ I feel that you are right—at least for the present, Lucy. But I wish that you had seen him : your accent, if not your words, would, I am sure, be different.”

Lucy would not dispute this point with him ; and their conversation during the rest of the day turned chiefly upon the manner of life she would be likely to lead at Natchez. The visit to Reichland had produced effects exactly opposite on the minds of the brother and sister respecting the new scheme. Her dread of being dependant upon strangers reconciled her perfectly to that which a few hours before she had shrunk from with distaste and fear ; while the bare possibility that the protection of Steinmark might be obtained for her, made Edward deeply regret the measure, in the success of which he had so recently rejoiced.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ As soon as the night closed in, Edward set off, accompanied by his sister, for a certain point in the thickest part of the forest between Fox's clearing and the plantation of Colonel Dart. It was here that for some weeks past, at the same dark hour of every Sabbath night, he had met such of the Negroes as had courage to creep from their beds and as—

assemble around him to pray, to listen to a portion of the Scriptures, and to such an exhortation from him as their peculiar circumstances called for.

The eloquence of Edward Bligh was of no mean order. His copious reading had enriched his style; and his strong feelings and enthusiastic piety lent a fervour and a force to all he uttered that could not fail of producing great effect. The poor negroes who listened to him failed not to feel this effect, though unconscious of the cause that produced it. Their souls were roused from apathy, and in many cases elevated to hopes as pure, as well-founded, and as sublime as those which inspired the young preacher who addressed them.

The first time they met to keep holy the Sabbath night, the only mode of obeying the commandment within their reach, Peggy, Phebe, one man, and three other women, formed the congregation; but the number had gradually increased, and on the preceding Sunday amounted to near fifty. Each individual approached the spot as nearly as might be alone, and no sound was heard, no human voice presumed to pierce the solemn stillness till the low clear tones of Edward were heard to pronounce "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*"

As it was considered essential to the safety of the meeting that the persons who composed it should arrive singly, Edward and Lucy did not join them till it was supposed they had all assembled; and it is difficult to conceive anything more wild and impressive than the scene which had hitherto greeted them when they reached the ground.

Seated in dusky groups, sometimes but dimly visible, still as the solid earth on which they reposed, and silent as the stars that gleamed above them, the humble people waited to hear the word of God.

A less exalted spirit than that of Edward Bligh might have been warmed into enthusiasm by this spectacle; and he never took his place amongst them without silently renewing the vow he had made to Heaven that no earthly consideration should ever induce him to abandon the attempt of leading these suffering spirits to seek for consolation before the throne of God.

On the night which followed Edward's visit to Reichland, he and his sister reached the ground a little earlier than usual, that no time should be lost in waiting for them. They knew how impatiently Cæsar must be expecting them, and were anxious that the delay necessarily occasioned by the meeting should be as short as possible.

They were not therefore greatly surprised, on entering the small and closely-sheltered space selected for the meeting, to find it untenanted. They sat down in silence on the moss-covered root of an old plane-tree, and remained for about a quarter of an hour patiently waiting the arrival of their sable friends.

Edward looked at that portion of the sky which the opening gave to his view, and perceived by the position of the stars that the usual hour of meeting was past.

"Something must have happened at the plantation, Lucy, to prevent the people from coming to-night," said Edward in a whisper.

"Poor Phebe! this then accounts for her absence," replied Lucy in the same still tone. "But we must wait no longer, Edward, or you may be too late for your appointment with Mr. Steinmark."

Edward rose without answering, and taking the arm of his sister, was about to traverse the opening in the direction of Cæsar's retreat, when the moonlight made distinctly visible the diminutive and decrepit figure of old Juno, who at that moment issued from behind a palmetto that grew beside their path.

"The favour of the Most High shield and protect you, blessed children!" she said, as they approached. "Marvel not that your poor people are not here to receive the balm you bring them. It is at Juno's bidding that they are absent; and you will not believe that it was for nothing she forbade those who hunger and thirst to come where only they could find the nourishment they lack."

"Wherefore, then, Juno, have you prevented their coming?" said Edward.

"Shall I tell you now?" said the old woman. "See," she continued, pointing with her bamboo towards the heavens, "it is late, and my tale may wax long:—must I indeed tell you all now?"

"No, no," said Lucy eagerly. "Juno, be here to-morrow night."

"Not so, sweet one," replied the old woman mournfully.

"The night after, then?"

"Not so," she repeated, in the same accents.

"On Wednesday, then?"

Juno shook her head, saying—

"When you may see Juno safely, you shall see her, chosen of Heaven! But you must be patient. It grows late," she continued, looking again towards the sky; "do not force me to remain longer with you now."

"No, no," said Edward hastily, and drawing his sister onward; "we will not stay to hear you now, Juno:—another time. Good night!"

"The blessings of the suffering wrap you round like incense, and hide you from every wicked eye!" said the aged woman, stepping out of their way, and dropping on her knees beside the path. She then raised her clasped hands to heaven, and her lips moved in prayer.

"One word, one single word, dearest Edward!" said Lucy eager-

ly; and withdrawing her arm from his, she stepped back to the old woman, and laying her hand upon her shoulder, uttered the name of "Phebe!" but without adding a word to it.

"Safe!" was the equally laconic reply; and Lucy darted after her brother, repeating the word in an accent of the most heartfelt joy.

"Alas! my love," said Edward gravely, "do you really place any confidence in the words of that poor maniac?"

"And you still will have it, Edward, that Juno is not in her right senses? How strange that seems to me."

"My doubts of her sanity cannot seem more strange to you, Lucy, than your belief in it does to me."

"And what are the grounds, Edward, upon which you found the idea that she has lost her reason? Surely, not because she is old, and speaks in language that shows more instruction than can be met with in those around her?—And yet, if it be not on these grounds, I see not any other for the suspicion."

"Is it possible, Lucy, that you do not perceive her wild enthusiasm?"

"I perceive her enthusiasm," replied Lucy gravely; then added with a sigh, "But why should we call it wild, Edward?"

"Because it evidently betrays her into excess, not of faith—that is impossible!—but into unreasonable excess of fervour in the expression of it."

A painful feeling oppressed the heart of Lucy as she listened to him. She had conversed much and often with old Juno; but, in her estimation, enthusiasm often took a shade of greater wildness than in her. She drove the idea from her with an effort, and replied—

"You have no faith, then, in that delightful word pronounced so confidently? You do not believe that Phebe is in safety?"

"I confess, Lucy, that Juno's saying it goes not for much with me.—It may be true, or it may not. It may be true in some mystical sense of her own, in explaining which she might keep the word of promise, to the ear, and break it to the sense. I am greatly grieved that this poor crazy soul should have such influence among our people as to prevent their meeting us."

Lucy feared to push the discussion farther; there was a vexed tone in her brother's voice very unusual with him, and she began talking of Cæsar, and of the probable security of the asylum promised him.

Earnestly and cheerfully he entered on this theme, assuring her that he conceived the situation more secure than any other could possibly be, as from the circumstance of Mr. Steinmark's having no negroes in his employ, there could be no pretence to search among

his labourers; a process which was often the means of betraying an unfortunate wretch into the savage hands from which he had escaped.

On arriving at Cæsar's lair, they found the poor fellow eagerly looking out for them. His body indeed was completely concealed; but his black head was protruded beyond the bush, and was most distinctly visible in the moonlight.

Lucy chid him for this imprudence; but Cæsar seemed too happy to listen to her, and crawling briskly from his hiding-place, he actually began to gambol round them in the very ecstasy of joy at their return.

There was, however, no time to be lost—not even sufficient to explain the success of their exertions to the gay object of them. "Follow me, Cæsar," said Edward hastily; "we must be quick, or the friend that waits for us may give us up and be off his post."

This hint was abundantly sufficient; there was no farther need to urge Cæsar onward, and he set off with all the recovered power of his active limbs.

"Do we walk too fast for you, Lucy?" said Edward, pausing for a moment.

"You can take a shorter cut," she replied, "than that which leads by our door. Fear not for me, dear Edward; even without this glorious moon I should not fear to find my way alone. Adieu, good Cæsar! We shall meet again; and now go on with all the speed you can."

So saying, she dropped quietly behind them, and in a few minutes they were out of sight.

Another moonlit mile, traversed without encountering a single living object, unless the ceaseless note of the wakeful bull-frog which accompanied her the whole way, be considered as giving evidence of an exception, brought Lucy in safety to her dwelling; but she was too anxious to hear that Cæsar was in safety also, to permit her going to bed till Edward returned. She had not long, however, to wait for him. Frederick Steinmark, faithful to his word, was found at the appointed spot. A cordial shake of the hand being exchanged between him and Edward, and a promise asked and given that he would speedily return to Reichland, they parted. Steinmark led Cæsar to a luxurious bed of straw and a substantial supper in a loft used only for the stowage of spare planks; and Edward returned to his sister, bidding her sleep as "doubtless and secure" as he was quite sure the object of her anxiety was about to do.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE lean and withered Juno, on leaving the hut of Peggy with young Whitlaw, continued her strange hobbling pace till she reached the running stream at the back of it. There she stopped and awaited him; for although he could easily have passed with one step the space which she painfully conquered by three, he lagged behind her. The effects this old woman and her grimaces produced on him were, in truth, complicated and contradictory in the extreme. He loathed her age and ugliness; he scorned her helpless, slavish poverty; he hated her assumption of licence, and even power, above her fellows; but stronger than all was, nevertheless, the sentiment which made him shrink from her mockings and mysteries, and yet bend and servilely crawl before them.

Juno pretty well knew that "such and so great" was her power; and many a good time and oft had the wily old woman indulged her abhorrence and revenge towards him and his occupation, by playing upon the terrors which ever lie crouching in the mind of a bad man, ready to torment him whenever some influence from without can be made to rouse and set the imps in action.

A metaphysician might have understood all this wonderfully well, and yet have been puzzled to work the machinery of such a mind as skilfully as Juno did. In truth, she knew to a nicety how far she might carry her tricks with every individual with whom she had to deal; and if all who undertook to rule their fellows studied the ins and outs of human feelings as patiently as old Juno, power as gigantic as Napoleon's might perhaps be seen to sweep over the earth oftener than once in half a dozen centuries.

The history of this whimsical being, half saint, half sorceress as she was, may be given in few words. She was born in the family of a French creole, the mistress of which chose her out of a number of new-born blackies submitted to her inspection, much as a young lady might select a kitten from among a litter for her own particular amusement.

The hateful position which gave Madame Briet the power of doing this was not of her own seeking, nor its consequences her own choice; but the steady, gentle kindness with which the helpless being she had thus drawn near her, was fostered as long as she lived, was indeed all her own. It was, however, with more amiability of feeling than correctness of judgment that the little negress was permitted not only

to be in attendance during all the lessons received by Madame Briot's children, but to read the books they read, and to emulate their progress in every branch of education through which white teachers could be prevailed upon to lead her. The dancing and music masters luckily both declared that they could by no means consent to such unwonted degradation; and thus Juno escaped the danger of becoming "elegantly accomplished." But even so, the hours devoted to the fine arts by her young mistresses were not passed without danger by her? for she spent them wholly in reading, and that reading was of the miscellaneous kind furnished by a New Orleans circulating library.

The yellow-fever carried off her kind-hearted but thoughtless patroness just as Juno reached the age of sixteen. M. Briot having European connexions, immediately decided upon placing his young family under their care. His New Orleans establishment was accordingly broken up, and his slaves sold.

Juno next became the property of an English settler; and thence the misery of her long and suffering life began. This man, struck by her unusual acquirements, amused himself by making her his companion and his mistress. He conversed with her as with a being of intellectual faculties equal to his own; furnished her with all the most stirring poetry of his country, for the gratification of seeing how it would work on her wild imagination; and having thus given her a glimpse of happiness not easily conceived by beings under ordinary circumstances, he too departed for Europe, taking with him a little yellow girl of eighteen months old, on whom he determined to bestow an education which should atone by its expense for the cruelty he considered himself *obliged* to practise by abandoning her mother. In a paroxysm of sentimental generosity, he determined, however, not to sell, but to give Juno to a friend he left behind him.

The unfortunate was not the less a slave for the manner of the transfer; and when she recovered from the frenzy that fell upon her on seeing her child borne away in the arms of its father, she found herself again installed as the mistress of a white man.

To him she bore many children; but her apathetic indifference to them and their father, though only manifested by an external tranquillity of demeanour alike undisturbed by love or hate, was in strange contrast to the wild fervour of her first affections.

After ten years of cohabitation, this man died, leaving her and her eight children still slaves. His executors sold them all to the highest bidders; and it was said that Juno never inquired to whose hands fate had consigned her offspring. For the third time, she herself became the favourite of her owner, and again bore children; but she performed this task, as she did all others, assigned her, much more like a well-regulated machine than a human being, never giving any outward in-

dication whatever of either will, wish, or affections, On the marriage of this man, she was again sold; and having the good fortune to be now purchased by a widow lady, who, though a slave-holder, was nevertheless a very charitable and well-disposed Christian, the unhappy woman seemed in some degree to awake from the unnatural state of torpidity into which the detested degradation of the last fifteen years of her existence had plunged her. With this mistress she remained above twenty years, during which time her manner of life was irreproachable; and she so evidently possessed the good lady's esteem, that everybody who knew the parties considered it as certain, that when the old lady died, she would leave Juno the legacy of her freedom.

Poor Juno thought so too; and in the deep silence of her unopened heart she had resolved to what use that freedom should be turned. During the years which succeeded the departure of her first child for England, this miserable but favoured slave contrived to learn from time to time, from some who still maintained a correspondence with the one only object of her idolatry, that her child was still alive, and still fondly cherished by its father; then, that she had married an Englishman of good fortune; and then, that she had died, leaving one little girl.

The tumult of hidden emotion into which these different tidings threw the forgotten mother need not be traced here. With care and pains that defeated every difficulty, she contrived to hear of the welfare of this grandchild, on whom her heart continued to fix all its burning fondness. She heard that the girl was beautiful, beyond even the far-famed beauty of the fair race among whom she dwelt; and the fancy of the poor negress sketched her image, and then clung to it as to an idol.

The liberality of those with whom Juno had lived had made her mistress of some scores of dollars, and she had never expended a cent from the day on which her first child was taken from her. This sum, though not amounting to half that which the purchase of her freedom would require, was quite sufficient to pay a passage to England; and to England she determined to go, there to behold her glorious grandchild, and there to die, as soon as her old mistress should have winged her way to heaven, and left her in possession of her freedom.

Her old mistress died at length. Bureaus, caskets, writing-desks, and chests were all searched to find her will, but searched in vain; and Juno, at the age of fifty, was still a slave.

She was now again sold, and transferred to the estate known by the name of Paradise Plantation, near Natchez. This last frightful disappointment of the patient steadfast hope of many weary years for a time unsettled the wits of the unfortunate woman; but

she had herself a strange consciousness that her mind was shaken, and took refuge in almost total silence, from the observations she dreaded to excite. She had now fallen into the hands of a planter who had bought her cheap, with many others of equally advanced age, merely for the drudgery of hoeing and weeding; an employment which, by keeping her entirely in the open air, certainly contributed to her recovery; and in about eighteen months after the death of her old mistress, Juno was so nearly well as to believe herself completely restored to mental health, and that without the overseers having ever suspected that it was a lunatic who performed her allotted tasks with so much more rapidity than any other in the gang.

As soon as these daily tasks were over, it was her habit to steal forth into the forest that skirted the estate, where she found the greatest delight in recalling verses which she had committed to memory during the days of her happiness, and reciting them aloud. Even after her reason was in a great degree restored, this exercise continued to be her chief solace; and though she usually chose her time and place so well, that "her spirits," as she chose to call the small green parrots that abound in that region, were for the most part her only auditors, yet it sometimes happened that she was overheard uttering these very unaccountable sounds; and the idea which had now become universal in the neighbourhood, that old Juno held intercourse with supernatural beings, had its origin in this.

Three times had she been sold with the other live stock without being removed from the estate, when Edward and Lucy Bligh established themselves in the forest near it. She was then rather more than seventy years old; but it was easy to persuade all such as were much younger, especially as most of those employed on Colonel Dart's property came there as strangers, that she was greatly more. She had quite ceased to think of freedom, or of England; and all that remained of her early affections was the idea, yearly becoming more vague, that she was the ancestress of a very beautiful and glorious race; to whom she should be reunited after death, provided that the days she had still to pass on earth were spent in doing all the good she could to the virtuous, and thwarting and tormenting the wicked to the utmost of her power.

The consciousness that this power was very considerable, was certainly a source of no trifling pride and pleasure to old Juno; but if she sometimes used it rather wantonly in vexing and confounding the spirits she deemed sinful, she never relaxed in her efforts to aid and sustain those she believed to be good. Phebe had not been on the estate a week before old Juno discovered the difference between her and her fellow-labourers, and a farther knowledge of her and her mother had revived a greater feeling of affection in the heart of the poor old woman

than she had felt since her sufferings began. She had become also one of the earliest and most devoted of Edward's flock. Lucy's delicate beauty recalled the visionary form she had so long cherished as that of her descendants; and her love and reverence to her, as well as to the cause in which she was engaged, was certainly sometimes expressed with a degree of vehemence that justified Edward's doubts as to her sanity.

Of Colonel Dart she had early conceived the very worst opinion; and that, amongst others, for three especial reasons. First, he liked to watch the flogging of his slaves; and notice was regularly given him by the various overseers when anything of the kind *worth looking at* was going on.

Secondly, he was the most suspicious man alive; often dreaming of plots, and then acting much as if they had been discovered and proved. And thirdly, he never went to church.

However wandering and wild the cause on which the wits of old Juno might occasionally have rambled, their acuteness was in no degree blunted by the exercise; for when she called them home again to the scenes passing around her, they not only penetrated to the motives and feelings of those among whom she lived, but enabled her to influence them in a manner that certainly made her one of the most important persons at Paradise Plantation.

For Whitlaw she conceived an aversion if possible more vehement than that inspired by his patron: and it is certain that many, many years had passed over her head since Juno experienced a degree of satisfaction so lively as that produced by the discovery that he too, while treating with ribald scorn the prophecies and revelations on which hang the hopes of the world, trembled before the mumbled incantations of an old woman.

She had hitherto used her power over him with little other object than his torment and her own amusement; but while idly lying about, as was her wont, now under the shelter of a ditch, and now of a furrow, she had heard more than one hint that Phebe was likely to become the "favourite" of the confidential clerk. Her first interference in the affair was to ascertain whether the poor girl herself was likely to be a willing party to the arrangement; but when she had discovered the truth on that point, her determination was at once taken that Whitlaw should never obtain possession of her; and she set to work in her own peculiar manner to prevent it, with the most perfect confidence of success.

It would be tedious to recount the glidings and the slidings, the creepings and the crawlings, the unseen exits and the unsuspected entrances, by which Juno learned all she wanted to know, and by aid of which she appeared wherever she wanted to be found; the effect of

her agency may be easily traced without following all the intricacies of the machinery she employed.

Having given this sketch of the origin of Juno and her *diablerie*, we may henceforward venture to describe her acts, without being suspected of any intention to mystify the reader.

On reaching the little brook behind Peggy's hut, the old woman stopped short, drawing figures in the air between her and it with her bamboo, which served her alternately as a crutch to sustain her failing strength on earth, and a wand with which to exercise power over the spirits of the air.

As Whitlaw with uncertain and reluctant steps approached her, his eyes were fixed on this instrument, and something like a smile of contempt curled his lip. The old woman saw it, and, as was usual with her upon all occasions when she wished to be particularly cabalistic and impressive, she addressed him in doggerel rhyme.

"Of human weakness, and of strength divine,
A symbol see in this charm'd rod of mine !
With this I stay my feeble steps on earth,
With this I give to airy spirits birth.
Beware !—lest in its twofold use you see
Aught that should make you scorn my power or me."

These words were accompanied with some of Juno's most effective grimaces. She opened wide her large prominent eyes, and glared upon him till the bold sceptic trembled; then fixing them on the earth, with her brows knit and her left hand supporting her chin, she stood as if meditating what she should do to punish him for the irreverent smile she had detected.

"What would you say to me, good Juno?" said Whitlaw, in an accent of respect and kindness, which nothing but terror could have drawn from him, when addressing one of her race.

Nobody could know this better than the old woman herself, and feeling that she had hold of his dastard spirit, she determined to give it a gripe before he escaped; therefore, again raising her very terrible-looking eyes to his face, and extending her bamboo towards him, she said:

"What would Juno say to you?
Unsmile that smile, or you shall rue!
A negro and a slave am I;—
But if it please the powers on high—
Those fearful powers that fill the air,
Holding mysterious counsel there—
On me their wondrous gifts to send,
All mortals must before me bend.
Kneel lowly then upon the mossy sod,
And kiss repentant my avenging rod.
Obey! and love and joy are thine!
Rebel! and vengeance deep is mine!"

Upon this awful summons, the nominal freeman knelt down before the nominal slave, and did in sober earnest most literally kiss the cane she extended to him, while the old woman chuckled inwardly; nay, an observant and tranquil-minded spectator might have perceived that outwardly, too, she evinced somewhat of the malicious triumph which so agreeably tickled her spirit. Her queer mouth twisted and contracted itself in a very remarkable manner, and there was a comical movement in her head that would have infinitely amused any lover of fun who had seen and understood it.

Whitlaw, however, neither saw nor understood anything, but that he was in the power of a hateful sorceress, leagued with the devil, and in some sort his vicegerent here on earth, whose power and activity in the particular spot he inhabited was the necessary consequence of the "wealth of niggers" on Paradise Plantation; an evil which he inwardly swore should be atoned for by the sufferings of this accursed race. Meanwhile, self-preservation and self-gratification were of course his principal objects; and urged by the feeling which these dictated, he framed his features into a look of very meek obedience as he rose from his humble position, and repeated his question—

"Now, good Juno, what would you say to me?"

One of the old woman's favourite tricks to produce effect was to change her dialect, from the English she had learned but too well during her days of happiness, to the negro gibberish usually spoken by her race; declaring that, when using the former, she was "under a power," and could not help it.

She now replied to Whitlaw without the aid of inspiration.

"I'se right—down glad, massa 'dential clerk, you dutiful to the spirits. I 'spect Juno can help you a spell, Massa Whitlaw, with the black beauty.—Please speak civil, 'cause of the spirits—One—two—three. Oh! there they are, skimming and dipping over your head. Speak civil, Massa Whitlaw, 'cause else they'll be on me 'gen, and that works Juno."

"Civil!" muttered Whitlaw between his teeth. "D——"

"Oh . . . h! Oh . . . h!" cried Juno, shuddering, and raising her bamboo towards the heavens, "Oh . . . h! They are coming, they are coming——."

Well, then," said Whitlaw, turning pale, "there's money for ye. And harkye——"

Here he bent down to the level of old Juno's ear, and, as if fearing that the spirits she talked of should overhear him, whispered the commission he wished to entrust to her.

"Ay—ay—ay," replied the sybil, nodding her head mysteriously three times, and then bursting out in a tone of triumph:

"Done! done it shall be!
And fear not that she
Shall dare wrestle with me,
Or much longer continue rebellious to thee."

She then made a sign that he should again lower his head to a level with hers; and having in her turn whispered something to him, she started back towards the hut, then paused, and seeing that he still remained where she left him, her wand was raised into the air, and the word "Away!" uttered in a loud, shrill, shrieking accent, that seemed preternaturally prolonged till it had reached the craven heart of Whitlaw; when he too started off, and departed from the spot as fast as his long legs could carry him.

CHAPTER XX.

WHATEVER might have been the whispered compact between Whitlaw and his inspired agent, the immediate consequence of it was the disappearance of Phebe from her mother's hut. Several days passed, and Peggy heard no tidings of her; but in the interval Edward Bligh paid her another midnight visit, to inform her of the reasons he had for believing that her daughter had not been sold at Natchez.

"Thank God for that, Master Edward!" she exclaimed. "Anything is better than to have her sold away off the place.—But do you think, sir," she continued, "that the clerk has put her into prison?"

Tears of deep but patient suffering rolled, almost unconsciously to herself, down Peggy's cheeks as she spoke. Edward's heart was wrung as he looked at her sunken, melancholy features; and though he certainly had no great faith in the circumstance himself, he related the manner in which Juno had replied to the inquiry of Lucy, by pronouncing the word "Safe."

"She did! she did!" cried Peggy in an ecstasy. "Then safe she is, Master Edward, as surely as I now hear your voice."

"Is it possible, Peggy," replied the young man almost reproachfully, "that you, who are a Christian, can place such confidence in a word uttered by that poor crazed cripple?"

"Crazed, Master Edward!—Oh! Juno is not crazed—unless crazed folks know more than uncrazed ones."

"How should she know more, Peggy? What means of knowledge can she possibly have beyond the rest of ye? I hope she is crazy, poor soul! for if not, she is unquestionably an impostor."

"I may not say no, when you say yes, Master Edward," replied

Peggy respectfully; "but the master himself knows, and all the overseers as well, that there is no use in not believing Juno. All she speaks comes true."

Edward wisely avoided any discussion on the subject, and proceeded to inquire the reason of the people's having absented themselves from worship on the night of the Sabbath; to which Peggy replied that she would willingly tell him all she had heard. "But then again, Master Edward," she said, "you will find that Juno knew more than any other body."

She then proceeded to relate, that on the Saturday night, Juno entered her hut long after she and the children were in bed, and having awakened her, very gently whispered in her ear—

"Pray to the great God of the white man and the negro, kneeling on your own floor, to-morrow night, if you would save from destruction those who have mercifully spoken to you in the name of the Lord."

A similar visit, Peggy said, accompanied by the same admonition, had been made in the course of that night to every hut on the estate inhabited by any of the congregation; and, "wonderful to tell," she added, "in two instances in which poor unconverted souls were lodged in the same chamber with the faithful, old Juno contrived to do her errand without their knowing that she had entered among them at all."

The old woman's manner of effecting her objet upon this occasion was certainly extraordinary, and her step must have been as rapid as it was silent, for it appeared that between the setting and the rising of the sun she had traversed the grounds in all directions.

"At any rate, Peggy," observed Edward, as he prepared to take his leave, "she has not improved my opinion of her by preventing my faithful flock from meeting me in the forest. Should she repeat this, I shall deeply regret that our meetings were ever made known to her."

So saying, he departed, leaving a degree of peace and hope with Peggy, respecting the fate of her child, which he was himself very far from sharing.

Edward had refused to let his sister accompany him on this midnight expedition, in consideration of the early hour at which the waggon would pass on the morrow which was to convey her to Natchez; and it was in truth not long after his return that the indescribable rumble of a huge American market-waggon, over corduroy roads, was heard approaching Fox's clearing. The first vibration of this sound gave Lucy warning to descend from her little low-roofed chamber, which now seemed to wear an aspect a thousand times more endearing than it had ever done before; but she had time to linger, and even to mount the ladder-like stair again, to bid it another farewell, before the far-resounding machine appeared in sight.

Edward would willingly have disbursed double the number of cents charged for Lucy's fare to Natchez, for the comfort of escorting her to her strange home; but he felt strongly persuaded that nothing would so much contribute to her safety, in case danger fell upon him, as their never having been seen together there. The only person who knew him by name in the town was Mrs. Shepherd; and from her he thought there could be little to fear, even should she hear from him as the woodland apostle of the negroes, provided he avoided as effectually as it was possible the identifying himself as the brother of her work-woman.

Without fully entering with Lucy into all his reasons for this,—for not for worlds would he have told her how darkly the shadows of events that were to come rested upon the path he had to tread,—Edward made her understand that, in his opinion, it would be better for them to meet only every Sunday in the forest, and pass that day together in the quiet, peaceful manner they were wont to do, than for him to be ever seen with her at Natchez.

Neither the employment he had chosen for her, nor the wild and precarious existence he had marked out for himself, appeared to Lucy at all likely to contribute to the happiness of either. A thousand times would she have preferred continuing the drudgery of their teaching together as they had hitherto done, to the certain separation and very doubtful advantages of this new scheme; but Edward had made her feel that it was her duty to obey him, and she determined to do so,—unless, as a terrible idea which often came across her made her think possible—unless a more obvious duty still should oblige her to substitute her own judgment for his.

It was therefore with a feeling of depression almost equal to what it might have cost her in better days to have quitted a far different home, that Lucy mounted the waggon that was to convey her from Fox's clearing to the gay and beautiful-looking town of Natchez.

There are few congregations of houses in any land that offer a fairer aspect to the eye than this of Natchez. The sudden and isolated elevation of its position, commanding, as it does, an unbroken expanse of forest and enormous extent, through which the gigantic Mississippi rolls its majestic stream, brightly visible at intervals for many miles both up and down its course, is of itself, in that region of level sameness, a very exhilarating feature.

The town, though it has no architectural graces to embellish it, is nevertheless gay-looking and pretty in no common degree. Nothing seems to suggest ideas of greater enjoyment in the external appearance of dwelling-houses than those contrivances for obtaining air and shade which are found in all warm countries. Whether the same effect be produced by this on the imaginations of those who are to "the man-

ner born," I know not ; but I believe no native of a somewhat northern climate ever looks upon these preparations for shade in the midst of sunshine, without feeling that they promise a very enviable sort of enjoyment.

Natchez abounds in verandas, balconies, and awnings ; in addition to which, abundance of fine orange-trees fill the air with their perfume. The vegetation is universally bright and abundant, and the whole scene animated by the variety of its living groups ; among which, creoles, quadroons, and negroes are found in nearly equal proportions ; while not unfrequently a party of Indians, more picturesque than any of them, may be seen sadly and silently gazing upon the wide expanse that was once their own, but which they now traverse with the timid step of an intruder.

On the whole, therefore, the spectacle that meets the eye on emerging from the forest behind Natchez is sufficiently beautiful to enliven any spirit less profoundly sad than that of poor Lucy ; but, in truth, she saw it not. Seated in a corner of the waggon, her close bonnet pulled low over her face, and her eyes shut,—in the hope of stopping the national catechism to which she was exposed from the driver, as to whence she came, where she was going to stop, *et cætera*—by feigning to be asleep,—the melancholy girl saw nothing till the vehicle drove up to the brick pavement before Mrs. Shepherd's door ; and perhaps she would willingly have closed her eyes again, when they showed her the grim, sharp, sour features of the stiff mistress of the establishment to which she was about to belong.

"Soh ! here you be, then," was the first salutation that greeted her. "Well, I didn't need have been in a pucker about your beauty, nohow ! Why, you're as pale as new whitewash. I calculate you can't stand much steady work, Miss ?"

"I am not in bad health, madam ; but I rose very early this morning, which has perhaps made me paler than usual."

"Humph ! I expect that you calculate early-rising to be bad for the health, then : but that's not a notion that will be approbated here ; so it's not over and above lucky."

"I am never late in bed," replied Lucy gently. It required an effort to pronounce even these few words without tears. The observation of Mrs. Shepherd unluckily touched a chord that suddenly took her memory back to the time, little more than one short year ago, when Phebe used to enter her pretty, nicely-curtained apartment on tiptoe, and before she let in a sunbeam upon her young mistress, watched cautiously to see if her fine eyes were open to receive it.

Poor Lucy felt much more angry at her own weakness for suffering such a thought to affect her, than at the harshness of the words which gave rise to it. But some of her mental reproaches ought to have

fallen upon her uncalculating thoughtlessness in leaving her breakfast untasted. The waggon-road to Natchez, from the necessity of going round a very wide, unfordable creek, was somewhat more than twelve miles; and deliberate as that motion must have been which carried her over it at the rate of two miles an hour, it is nevertheless certain that the continuance of it for six hours, when fasting, did make Lucy feel very painfully exhausted; a weakness which may be the more readily excused, when the depressed state of her spirits at parting for the first time in her life from her brother is taken into consideration.

Her slight and delicate frame, however, was animated by a mind that would not have disgraced one promising greater strength; and her tearful propensities were chased by a genuine smile when Mrs. Shepherd continued the conversation by saying, "I expect you'll be for beginning your boarding at once, Miss Bligh?"

"I should indeed be very glad of some breakfast," replied Lucy.

"I guess so; and I'll be setting the work you are to start with while you eat it: that's tit for tat, you know. Didol!" screamed the mistress of the house, without moving from her place behind the counter.

A little negress of about ten years old answered the call.

"Take a cup of coffee and a roll for the new lady into the keeping-room; and tell Miss Clarinda Butterworth to come to me."

Miss Clarinda Butterworth appeared accordingly.

"Here's the new Miss for the plain-work, Miss Clary. Show her in; and then step back to me for the frock-skirts she's to begin with. She'll be aftereating her breakfast while I fix 'em."

The young person thus addressed was far from ill-looking; but there was a little air of pretension and hauteur about her, particularly observable as she ran her eyes over the attire of the humble personage committed to her charge, which might have been very disagreeable to one who had in any degree aspired to competition with the elegance of a young Natchez sempstress of unmixed white blood. Luckily, this was a presumption that Lucy dreamed not of; and consequently the little toss of the head, and the lazy, reluctant sort of step, with which Miss Clary preceded her to the keeping-room, were as harmless as the chirpings of a gay-plumaged bird.

The keeping-room was a good-sized parlour behind the shop; and Lucy found assembled there four young women, who, with herself and her conductor, formed the whole company of Mrs. Shepherd's very thriving needlework establishment.

"How d'ye do, Miss Lucy Bligh?" exclaimed a bright-faced, black-eyed girl as she entered, whose countenance expressed, in pretty equal proportions, boldness and good-humour: "we have been looking for you this half-hour."

"You behave yourself, Miss Arabella Tomkins," said a damsel at least a dozen years her senior, who, from her situation at the head of a long work-table, a careful frown upon her brow, and an air of precision over her whole person, was evidently the deputy commander-in-chief: "that's no way to receive a new-comer."

Lucy paused for a moment after she entered, to see if she should be invited to any particular place in the apartment: but this not being the case, she placed herself at a little table near one of the windows, which being open, tempted her, both from the fresh air and fine prospect which it offered.

"Beg your pardon, but that's my place, if you please," said the haughty Miss Clarinda, placing her hand upon the back of the chair thus unintentionally usurped. Lucy quitted it instantly; when her conductor, putting the middle finger of her right hand in her mouth, and then ensconcing it in her thimble, sat herself down to work, without uttering a single syllable more, either of introduction or welcome.

"Will you please to sit here?" said a girl, the sweetness of whose voice and accent caused Lucy involuntarily to hasten her step as she approached to accept the offered chair. This welcome overture came from the youngest and the prettiest girl in the room; but her large eyes, as she raised them to give the stranger a glance of welcome, had an expression of shyness that made Lucy feel the more grateful to her for the effort she had made to relieve her from her awkward position.

"Thank you very much," said Lucy, "but I am afraid I shall be in your way; don't let me derange all this beautiful lace."

"Oh no!" replied the little beauty; "here is quite room, and to spare, for you and me too."

"Mind your work, Miss Talbot," was uttered from the top of the table.

A girl on the other side of Lucy laughed aloud, and then said, in a tone that hardly affected to be a whisper, "Cross old maids are a plague everywhere, a'n't they, Miss Bligh?"

"You think you may say anything to-day, 'cause of the pinc-apple, Miss Olivia; but Mrs. Shepherd must look for another fore-woman if your tongue's to run that rate."

Miss Olivia hummed a tune.

At this moment the little Dido entered, with a tray bearing a large cup of coffee and a very delicate-looking white roll. Wherever there are slaves, all white persons who are hired to work at any employment are sure to be delicately fed; as the difference made between the two races is always as marked as possible in this particular, as well as in all others.

"I suppose you are half starved, Miss Lucy Bligh?" said the laugh-

ing-eyed Arabella, in a tone that seemed to hover between quizzing and kindness.

Lucy wisely chose to answer to the latter only, and replied with a very sweet smile, "It is very true, indeed. I have eaten nothing to-day, and have been travelling ever since four o'clock."

"My — !" responded Arabella, the good-humoured division of her piebald character coming forward; "what's one cup of coffee after that? I say, black devil,—you Dido, you,—bring another cup of coffee here, hot, hot, hot, and another roll, this instant, or I'll roll you in no time."

"You are very kind," said Lucy, really enjoying her repast, and cheered to think that neither Mrs. Shepherd, her prim deputy, nor even the sublime Clarinda were to be her only companions; "but I am afraid that Mrs. Shepherd will think me absolutely voracious."

"Never mind her if she does," said Arabella: "she's bound to board, as you know, and we're not to be treated like niggers."

Miss Clarinda Butterworth left the room while this was passing, and presently returned with an armful of little white dresses, which, with a fitting accompaniment of threads and needles, she delivered over to Lucy "to begin; who, hastily concluding her breakfast, set herself with a most willing spirit to her task.

"Three on one side the table, and one on the other, ladies, is the way to have room fit—for nothing but just to run your needles into each other's eyes; so you'll please to walk over, Miss Lucy Bligh, and seat yourself by Miss Arabella Tomkins."

Lucy obeyed; but it was not without reluctance, that she quitted the side of the pretty creature who had been addressed by the forewoman as Miss Talbot. It is true that she had not again addressed her; but her first friendly words, and sundry little kind attentions during her breakfast, made her feel as if she were leaving a friend.

Before Lucy again seated herself, she proposed to lay aside her shawl and bonnet, which Miss Talbot had taken from her and laid upon the table.

"These things will be in the way here, ma'am," said she, addressing the superior: "shall I take them to my room?"

"You're to sleep with me, Miss Bligh," exclaimed the pretty little Talbot eagerly; "so I will show you the way."

The two girls left the room together, but not without a word of admonition from their chief, intimating that they were not to stay too long.

In the short interview which they allowed themselves after mounting to the little attic allotted for their use, Lucy was pleased to observe that her companion uttered no phrase against any of the party they had left, or even the sour Mrs. Shepherd herself, but pointed out with

pretty eagerness all the little preparations she had made for her comfort, and then said, "Now let us make haste down stairs; it is much better to please Miss Frampton if we can."

Lucy's judgment as well as her temper led her to agree very heartily in this opinion, and she followed her new friend down stairs with more lightness of heart than she had felt since Edward first announced her new vocation. "It's eleven o'clock, ladies," was uttered by Miss Frampton as they entered. The two girls separated, each taking her allotted place; and we must now leave Lucy sedulously engaged in propitiating the favour of her employer by the rapid and skilful movement of her delicate fingers.

CHAPTER XXI.

FOR some hours after Lucy's departure, her brother again fell into that wavering state of mind which had already nearly shaken his reason. He had sent from him the only earthly object to which his heart clung; he had consigned to another the precious charge which his dying father bequeathed to his care; he had left himself alone, surrounded by ignorance and sin, while the one bright spirit that God had given to cheer and sustain him in his thorny path was by his own act banished from the place that Nature assigned her by his side, to buffet alone with the rude encounters inevitable in the position in which he had placed her.

"Lucy! my pretty Lucy!" he exclaimed, while tears of anguish rolled down his pale cheeks, "how wilt thou bear 'the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes,' when thou hast no fond brother close at hand to love and comfort thee?"

And then his imagination, active to an excess that too surely indicated disease, placed his gentle sister before him in a hundred different situations in which she was exposed to vulgar insolence, or still more offensive admiration.

He started up, determined at all risks to follow and reclaim her; but ere he had walked a quarter of a mile from his door, another set of images seized upon his fancy with equal distinctness. He heard the mingled accents of penitence and hope rising amidst the midnight silence of the forest from the race oppressed in body and in soul, whom God had called upon him to succour; he saw them clinging to him and the faith he taught, in defiance of stripes and bonds. Should he forsake them? No! not even if by so doing he could place his beloved sister on the throne of the world. No! he would share their bonds—

he would partake their stripes—he would follow and exhort them to lift their tearful eyes to God, till the bloody death that threatened him should close his lips for ever.

And Lucy?—must her spotless life be offered up with his? Edward's soul shrunk from the needless sacrifice, and after pausing on his way for many minutes with clasped hands and downcast eyes in earnest meditation, he turned back, once more relieved by the conviction that it was his duty to send his sister from him.

Never was there a human soul on which virtue had a stronger hold than that of Edward Bligh. Once more persuaded that he was doing right, his serenely returned, his mind recovered its wonted power, and he again believed himself capable of great and glorious actions.

He now determined upon once more seeking Frederick Steinmark. He had already made a second visit to Reichland; but the father of the family was in his fields, and he would not enter. With a spirit invigorated by renewed confidence in himself, Edward proceeded to the happy dwelling of his new friend. He was again, ushered into the common sitting-room, and again stood before the noble German forester; but not, as before, was Frederick Steinmark the only object upon which his eye now rested. Standing beside him as he sat in his accustomed chair, with one hand resting on its high back, and the other lovingly caressing the scanty curls of her father, stood Lotte, certainly much fairer than the daughters of man if taken at their usual standard, and with a look at once so innocent and so brightly beaming with intelligence and joy, that it is impossible to conceive anything more likely to seize upon such an imagination as that of Edward, than was her figure as thus presented to him. He gazed for one short moment only, but her image thenceforward became the idol of his fancy, till every throbbing pulse was hushed for ever.

Lotte was engaged, when young Bligh approached, in pleading earnestly for some favour about which her smiling father seemed to hesitate. She stopped short however in her eager speech as soon as she saw him, and somewhat abashed by the ardent but involuntary gaze of the young man, curtsied slightly and prepared to depart.

Lotte knew perfectly well, however, who he was; for her father, though he carefully kept Cæsar's secret, had given so animated and faithful a description of the forest schoolmaster that she could not mistake him; and had he looked at her with less evident wonder and admiration, she would have greatly wished to become acquainted with a person who had so deeply interested her father. As it was, perhaps she was not sorry when Frederick Steinmark, while he held out one hand to welcome Edward, retained her with the other.

"You must not run away, Lottchen," said he. "Mr. Bligh, this is my only daughter; and there," pointing to the open portico before

the windows, "are four idle sons of mine, as much bent upon a thriftless frolic as if they were in fatherland, where gentles eat the corn they do not reap. Your coming is a godsend for them. I really believe I shall now grant their petition,—which is for us to go, one and all, to eat our dinner and pick strawberries in a meadow behind Karl's mill,—that I may have the pleasure of introducing you to my whole family with as little delay as possible."

Edward answered with as much grace as any man could be expected to do who was in the very act of falling desperately in love for the first time in his life.

"That is well, then," said Steinmark, in reply to Edward's timid acceptance of the invitation; "and you may now go, Lotte, and announce to your mother, and the noisy party she has got round her, that it is my patriarchal will and pleasure this wild-goose scheme should take place; whereby we shall lose the decent comforts of my farmhouse board, in order to gain the extraordinary gratification of eating a meal like so many houseless Bohemians. Away with ye!"

Lotte bounded across the long room and through the window, whereupon the arrival of her and her news at the portico was announced by a discharge of hurrahs that seemed to make the welkin ring; and the instant after, the whole party dispersed and were out of sight, some in one direction, some in another, in order to collect the multitudinous articles of which the luxuries of a dinner on the grass must be composed. Lotte darted off to the garden to seek lettuces, tomatoes, cucumbers, and all the other solid delicacies with which that metropolis of the vegetable kingdom abounds.

Even in the transient glance which Edward caught of her figure as she glided past the other windows, he perceived that she went not alone. He perceived too, to his sudden and unspeakable torment, that the stately figure which accompanied her seemed bending to converse with her with a sort of courtly assiduity, that, highly as he rated brother's love among earthly affections, could not proceed from one who stood in that relation.

"Now, my friend, we are alone," said Steinmark, "my wild flock are on the wing, and I may venture to tell you that our poor runaway is perfectly restored to health and strength after his weary travel and long fast; but I think it would be as well for you not to attempt seeing him at present."

Such were the words of Frederick Steinmark, addressed to the man who, a few days before, had spoken on this subject with a degree of feeling and agitation that it was almost painful to witness. And how did he listen to it now? His eyes fixed upon the spot at which he had seen Lotte disappear, his ears insensible of the sounds that reached them, and his whole person having the air of a man sleeping rather

than waking, he stood before Steinmark heart-struck, silent, and immovable.

The kind-tempered German smiled as he watched a fit of absence more completely absorbing to the faculties than any, as he believed, that he had ever himself indulged in. But sympathising with the malady, and feeling that it deserved all indulgence, he treated Edward exactly as he would have wished to be treated himself on all similar occasions; that is to say, he left him unmolested to recover his wits, while he pursued the lecture which the petition of Lotte had interrupted.

The pang which had transfixed Edward, though it left a wringing anguish at his heart which his after-life was not long enough to cure, kept not his senses enchained beyond one or two dreamy moments; and he then started with a mixture of astonishment and offended pride at seeing Steinmark reading composedly in his easy chair, while he stood unnoticed before him.

Edward turned to go; but before he had taken a second step, the recollection of the party about to set off for the meadow, the invitation he had received to join it, and the gratitude he owed for the important kindness already bestowed, made him turn again, and in a voice which many conflicting feelings caused to tremble, he said:

"I fear, sir, that I have intruded on you very inconveniently."

Steinmark raised his eyes, and instantly perceived an expression of wounded feeling in the countenance of his interesting guest.

"Intruded, Mr. Bligh? No, no! But, do you know, I suspect that, over and above the points of resemblance which we mutually discovered in each other when last we met, I may now shake hands with you on the discovery of another. My saucy children tell me that I am the most absent man alive, but I think you beat me. Now, tell me, did you hear one word of all I said to you about Cæsar?"

"Cæsar, sir!" repeated Edward, while a tingling consciousness of the cause of his strange inattention crimsoned his cheeks. "I beg your pardon: certainly I did not hear you name Cæsar. How is he, sir!"

"You could not have indulged in a fit of absence before any one more bound to forgive it than myself," replied Steinmark, laughing; "and therefore I will repeat my assurances that your protégé is as well as if he had never missed a meal or soared a flogging. But what are we to do with him next, my good friend?"

Once more awakened to thoughts of earth, Edward entered eagerly and with most anxious feeling into the subject. He stated the reasons he had for believing that the slave-holders throughout the country were more on the alert than ever to discover and punish all delinquencies among their slaves, and hinted his serious apprehensions that

Mr. Steinmark himself might suffer for the pitying kindness he had extended to the poor runaway.

"I do not think that, even were the thing discovered, they could punish me for the misdemeanour in any way that would materially annoy me," replied the German composedly; "but tell me, Mr. Bligh, has anything occurred to you since we met last to suggest the idea that these bloodhounds are more vindictive than formerly?"

Edward hesitated. "Before my answer to this question can be intelligible, my dear sir," he said, "I think I must become for a short space my own biographer."

"You could not please me better," replied his host, with a look and accent that might have given courage and confidence to the most modest spirit that ever shrunk from such a task; "and indeed," he added, "you stand partly bound to this by promise. The preparations for our rural feasting will occupy the projectors of it for a full hour, I doubt not; and I will lead you to a spot where they will be sure to seek me, but less liable to interruption than this, where I can meanwhile enjoy the gratification I so greatly wish for, of knowing something more about a man so singularly unlike those amongst whom fate has thrown him."

He led the way to the open window as he spoke, and having left the room, proceeded across the lawn to a bank of turf raised under the shelter of a noble tulip-tree. A semicircle of fine orange-trees nearly enclosed it in the front, but leaving an opening to a small flower-garden, so evidently of feminine arrangement, that Edward, as he took his seat upon the bank, felt almost as if he was again in the presence of the wondrous creature who had flashed across his sight more, as he thought, like a vision of light than a reality.

It was indeed a lovely nook—sheltered, cool, fragrant and sequestered, well-suited both for confidence and repose; and here Edward Bligh recounted the sad incidents of his life, and the singular position in which they had left him and his young sister, with a simple pathos that went to the very heart of the good German, and created a feeling of admiration and attachment to both the orphans which he was far from attempting or intending to express in words.

"But why, in the name of kind feeling and good fellowship, Edward, is not your dear Lucy with us here? If our situations had been reversed—if you had had the home and I the sister, she would not have been now in Mrs. Shepherd's store at Natchez. So there is not such perfect sympathy between us, Bligh, after all."

But there was moisture in the eye of Steinmark as he spoke; and as he uttered this reproach, he held out his hand to the object of it. Edward grasped that friendly hand with deep emotion, and replied with perfect frankness:

"Nor do I think I could have had the heart to place her there after seeing you, had it not been for Cæsar, and for the weight of obligation I had already taken on myself for his sake. To have thrown another upon your bounty, even though that other was my sister, merely because I read your generous heart in your eyes, would have been like extortion,—I could not do it."

"Surely you blundered egregiously, my young friend, in placing two such acts, as hiding a runaway negro in a country where murder has been repeatedly committed to punish those who would befriend the race, and receiving your glorious sister Lucy as a friend and inmate upon the same footing. In the first case, I freely confess that I do think I showed myself to be a very good-natured fellow, and that you ought to make me your best bow for receiving so dangerous a guest as Cæsar; but for the second, I most truly believe that the obligation would be much more on our side than yours. You may partly guess, Edward, how profound must be the retirement in which we live; and would it be a slight good, think you, for my Lotte to have, for the first time in her life, such a companion as your gentle, patient, and accomplished Lucy?"

There was something most deliciously soothing to the feelings of Edward in the idea that it was possible his sister might become the favoured and favourite friend of Lotte Steinmark. He murmured some few words expressive of grateful feelings, and his countenance spoke more eloquently than his tongue; but Frederick Steinmark was far from guessing what a rush of unspeakable gratitude his words had produced; for, in most simple truth, he meant exactly what he said, in declaring that the society of such a girl as the Lucy of Edward's narrative would be an inestimable blessing to his daughter.

"This day," resumed Steinmark, "will make you in some degree acquainted with my family. But there is also a young stranger with us, a countryman, who has wandered thus far from the fatherland solely for the gratification of a wandering fancy. My eldest son made acquaintance with him in Philadelphia, and has brought him to his forest home; and this Sigismond von Hochland really seems to deserve all the fine things our Fritz says of him. Nevertheless, I cannot allude to your touching story, Edward, before him, till you shall yourself know him sufficiently to admit him to your friendship: but my wife must hear it, and her invitation will then be joined to mine for the speedy arrival of your dear sister among us. And yet," continued Steinmark thoughtfully after a moment's silence, "eager as I am for this, I do believe it will be more prudent to get Cæsar off the premises before she arrives. Should he unhappily be discovered here, I fear that both you and your Lucy might suffer much inconvenience were your share in the transaction to be traced. I suspect that, even now, you are in

some degree a marked man among these abominable slave-drivers, Edward. The absence of your woodland congregation on Sunday night most decidedly indicates alarm amongst them; and I think, therefore, that I must counsel you, contrary as it is to my wishes, to let your sweet sister remain where she is for a few days. You are quite right not to be seen with her at Natchez; but perhaps on the Sabbath, if she meets you in the forest, as you talk of, we might arrange our idle Sunday ramble so as to effect an introduction without bringing her to Reichland. It may be some consolation for her to know that she has friends so near her."

This conversation respecting Lucy, her situation, and her feelings, did more towards restoring Edward entirely to himself than anything else could have possibly done. He most entirely agreed with Steinmark that there was the greatest necessity, for all their sakes, that the utmost caution should at this moment be used in everything with which they were mutually concerned: and this being admitted, they set to scheming and planning, proposing and rejecting, a number of devices for the disposal of Cæsar.

But their consultations were soon interrupted; their privacy invaded, and all thoughts for the future put to flight, by the appearance of the party which approached them from the house.

CHAPTER XXII.

FAR in advance of the rest was Hermann. It was he who, as usual, undertook to find his father and, more difficult far, to rouse him from whatever occupation or reverie might have thrown its chains over him, and to bring him to join the joyous set who were starting off for Karl's *Erdbeere Feld*, as the not far-distant place of their destination was constantly called by all the family; though the young miller very gravely declared, that if it produced no crop more valuable than the *erdbeeren* from which they chose to name it, he would plough it up in spite of them all. Notwithstanding this assumption of prudence in the lord of the land to which they were going, there was not one of the set who appeared to enter into the strawberry frolic with more zeal than himself. With his mother on one arm, and a huge basket on the other, Karl came next in order, the very emblem of youth, health, and cheerfulness. His large straw hat seemed rather to be suspended upon some sturdy bunch of his thick sunny curls, than to be fixed in the ordinary mode upon his head; while his laughing blue eyes looked out from

under it as if to challenge the anticipated exclamations its extraordinary position might elicit.

Mary, who looked, as her husband often told her, a great deal too pretty and too young to be the mother of so stalwart a youth, walked beside him, looking up into his bright young face with an eye almost as mirthful as his own, though in sage and sober accents she repeated once and again—

“Karl! Karl! what will your countryman—a baron too!—think of your wild ways? Be sober, Karl, or, upon my word, I must fall back upon the squadron behind. What a very queer boy you are! Whenever you are more than commonly disposed to be whimsical, it seems to me that you always select me for your companion. I am afraid I have very little dignity, Karl.”

“Not the very least bit in the world, mother. Now, if you were only in the slightest degree like my ever revered, honoured, and honourable aunt Karoline, born Baroness Von Uberkümpher, how differently would all your children treat you! But don’t take on, mother,—it can’t be helped now; so you may as well bring down your spirit to your condition, and submit to be loved and adored by your republican children, just as if there was no such thing as dignity in the world.”

Behind the mother and son followed the unrustic figure of Fritz, very carefully and cautiously driving a wheelbarrow containing all the weightier matters necessary to the feast; and the procession closed by a trio, consisting of Lotte, Sigismund Von Hochland, and Henrich.

When they first started, Henrich was as usual at Lotte’s side; but ere they reached the orange-trees, the description Von Hochland was giving her of the scenery near his own residence in Westphalia won him from it, and the stranger was now walking between them. The gay and animated young man spoke in his native tongue, which, though native also to his companions, was no longer their ordinary language, and it had for both of them a charm which certainly increased the pleasure with which they listened to him. Lotte, though her gayer spirits prevented her pining for the land of her birth with the intense longing after it which embittered the existence of her brother, had nevertheless drunk in its poetry, and revelled in the descriptions of its scenery, till she too was as devotedly a child of Germany in her heart as himself; and loved its voice, and its music, its storied castles, and its sunny hills, as if she remembered the early days she had passed among them. The arrival of Sigismund was certainly the most animating event that had ever broken the monotony of their peaceful lives; and perhaps it was some consciousness of the pleasure he gave which inspired the animated expression his handsome countenance wore, as

he rapidly poured forth his recollections and his feelings to the willing ears of the brother and sister.

But though earnestly engaged in conversation, they were nevertheless as actively assisting as the rest of the party in the business of the day. Henrich bore in each hand a basket of something, he knew not what, which Karl had committed to his charge; Sigismond had swung over his shoulder with very reverend care a delicate frail, filled with salad, entrusted to him by Lotte; while the fair maiden herself very daintily balanced between her two hands, at first setting out, a little basket without a handle, packed by herself, wherein, womanlike, she had mixed utility with elegance; for it contained cream from her own pretty dairy, enough, according to Hermann's instructions, to drown all Karl's strawberries, together with abundance of sweet-scented flowers to strew around the spot they should select for the scene of their repast. But as Sigismond grew more animated, this double-handed caution became more embarrassing, for she could not look towards him without endangering the balance; so at length she stopped, saying, "Henrich, do you not think we could contrive to envelop my cream and flowers in a napkin, and then swing it over a stick, as Herr Sigismond has done his frail?"

It was exactly as the trio stopped to make this proposed alteration in the arrangement of the baggage, that Steinmark and Edward, obeying the call of Hermann, came forth from the shelter of the orange-trees and joined the party. Steinmark felt that he had perhaps enlisted his new friend in a party too gaily light-hearted to be agreeable to one who had so many heavy cares upon his mind; but it was done, and could not be recalled; so the next thought that crossed his benevolent mind was how to make the day pass pleasantly with him. He perceived at a glance that the gay young baron was enlisted into the playful service of the hour, and perceiving some unfinished arrangement about the packages which surrounded Lotte, he put his arm through Edward's, and leading him up to her, said,

"Here, Lottchen, I bring you a very valuable recruit, able and willing to help you in all the vagaries you may choose to perform. Herr Hochland, give me leave to introduce to you my valued friend Mr. Edward Bligh."

If Frederick Steinmark's object was to put Edward at his ease, he failed completely: it was not ease he felt,—every faculty was on the stretch, every sense was strained. But if, thoughtless of his ease, his purpose was to make him happy, he succeeded perfectly: happiness unfelt, unknown, unimagined till that moment, throbbed in his breast and bounded through his veins.

He was close to Lotte. Lotte was speaking to him; she smiled too,

smiled on him as she placed the light burthen she allotted him on his arm; and with the exception of some ecstatic intervals, when a rapt enthusiasm had seemed to raise him altogether above the joys or sorrows of this mortal state, this moment was decidedly the happiest of his life.

Joyously then did the troop march onward towards the mill. But though the distance was short, the way—on this occasion at least—was long. Fritz overturned the wheelbarrow at one spot, and Sigismond's frail slipped off his stick at another. Lottchen stumbled as the Herr Hochland was talking to her of fatherland; but Edward was close behind, and his hand prevented her basket, if not herself, from falling. Steinmark and Hermann amused themselves with finding out cross nooks in the short bit of forest they had to pass, and then trying who could best recover them,—an exercise at which the senior beat the junior hollow. Mary and Karl continued together, and pursued their way with as much steadiness as the gambols of the young miller would permit; and Henrich still hung on the skirts of his countryman, enjoying from time to time such renewal of their former conversation as the desultory nature of their progress would permit.

But it was astonishing to observe the multitude of unforeseen accidents which detained them. Sometimes it was a very harmless snake which darted from bush to brake before them, but which Karl, in the superfluity of his activity, declared must be chased and put out of harm's way; which meant, as he explained it, to be placed beyond the power of giving or-receiving injury for evermore. Then Lotte's eyes were accidentally raised to a marvellous cluster of wild grapes that hung above their heads, and the baskets must be placed on the ground, and the grapes must be won, before another step forward could be taken. At another time a whole bevy of butterflies seemed to spring up, as it were, from the ground, and showed themselves so brightly beautiful to the unaccustomed eyes of the gay Sigismond, that he must perforce catch some of them. Then followed laughter at his want of skill, accompanied by consolatory assurances that what he mistook for marvels were in truth the most ordinary insects that Louisiana produced. In short, so much time was expended in this ramble over a plain path of a mile and a half long, that by the time they reached the *Erdbeere Feld*, Karl, who proclaimed himself master of the revels, as one of his manorial rights, declared that if they did not all and every of them set about gathering the strawberries forthwith, and that steadily and perseveringly, without gossip, sport, or idleness of any kind, they might as well set off again to return as they came, for the purpose of the expedition would be defeated, inasmuch as it would be found impossible to complete the work in reasonable time for dinner.

This solemn remonstrance produced the desired effect—in a moment

the whole party were to be seen scattered singly over the field; and though before the commanded quantity was fully furnished, some alteration in this disposition of the gleaners took place, and Sigismund had approached Lotte on one side, and Edward on the other, the business was on the whole well and punctually accomplished. And then the riot and the din of unpacking the wheelbarrow, and disposing with all imaginable inconvenience and enjoyment its contents upon the grass, followed; and that sort of happy, noisy confusion took place, which those only can conceive who have shared in the very delightful but very unaccountable enjoyment of preparing a dinner upon the grass.

A few short hours before, any one who well knew Edward Bligh would have declared that no scene could have less charm for him than the one in which he was now engaged. Mirth in his best and happiest days had but little attraction for him; and though he loved to wander for hours amid the beautiful scenery of his native State; the contemplative temper of his mind communicated a pensive, quiet composure to his step, as unlike as possible to the noisy, bounding progress which at one moment sent his present companions forward at the rate of five miles an hour, while at another they all stopped short as if spell-bound, to find subject for mirth in they knew not what, and an excuse for tarrying, they knew not why. Still less, perhaps, was the scene which followed such as he would have heretofore joined in with pleasure; but now his eyes shot forth glances of young joy, as he found himself seated on the grass beside Lotte Steinmark. Could he have looked into her heart, he might perhaps have lost a portion of the intoxicating pleasure he now for the first time tasted. He might have seen that the ready ear, the gentle smile, the courteous reply she lent him, were rather the result of what she believed to be her father's wishes than of her own. He might have discovered, that even while her beautiful eyes were turned on him, she was unconsciously listening to every word pronounced, whether to her or to another, on the other side, where sat Sigismund. But he saw, he knew nothing but that he was seated in dear, familiar, friendly intercourse beside the only woman who had ever charmed his senses, and taught him to know what poets mean by "Love."

In truth, it was a pleasant banquet to all. The jocund laugh went round, and so did the bright light goblet of their native wine—a luxury furnished by the good Baron Steinmark in greater abundance than his rustic brethren wished or approved; but on occasions like the present, the forest family drank to their distant kinsman's health with cordial gratitude. Then followed some of their still fondly cherished native airs. Lotte sang with the wild untutored sweetness of a bird. Her ear was excellent, and Henrich taught her by his flageolet all the most

popular tunes of Germany, a large collection of which had been sent him by his uncle. The words too which she sang were generally of Henrich's composition, and for the most part expressed his clinging love for the soil that gave him birth.

It was perhaps in compliment to Sigismund that Lotte on this occasion selected a ballad in which Henrich had poured forth, on a well-known German air, and in his native tongue, all the glowing patriotic feelings which more than warmed—which in truth burned in his breast; and the touching style in which she sang it gave sufficient evidence that every word found its echo in her own heart. Frederick and Mary exchanged a glance, and sighed: they well knew Henrich's ardent love of the country that was no longer his, but till now they had neither of them been fully aware how deeply Lotte sympathised in this feeling.

The effect of the ballad and Lotte's manner of singing it was sufficiently powerful on all present. Edward, who understood quite enough of the language to catch the feeling it inspired, would have joyfully given half the existence remaining to him on earth could be thereby have become a native German. The eyes of Henrich overflowed; and even his gay brothers, now so firmly rooted in the soil to which they had been transplanted, looked sad and thoughtful. Young Sigismund alone enjoyed the whole thing—melody, words, and the deep feeling which accompanied them—with unmixed delight. "Charming! charming! charming!" he exclaimed, with clasped hands and glistening eyes. "How little did I expect to hear such sounds in a Louisianian forest!"

"And now Sigismund," said Fritz, "it is your turn. Lotte's words I never heard before; but she sang them to the same air, if I mistake not, on which you composed your own patriotic rhapsody. The tune is good enough to hear twice. We have had, as I guess, the Steinmark version—now let us have the Hochland."

A vivid blush dyed the cheeks of the young baron at this address, but it passed in an instant, and with equal frankness and good humour he drew a flute from his pocket, and having skilfully played the beautiful national air which Lotte had just sung, he laid the instrument aside, and sang to the same notes, and in his own musical language, some verses which he had written a few weeks before at Philadelphia, and performed for the benefit of his friend Fritz. The thoughts when put into English might be rendered as follows:

Hark to the strain!
 Let me hear it again—
 'Tis a spell that can waft me o'er land and o'er sea;
 Oh! hark to the strain!
 Is it pleasure or pain,
 That sends my heart, Fatherland! throbbing to thee?

It is glorious, when Fancy has taken the helm,
To mount the gay bark that shall bear us along,
And to bound at her touch to some newly-found realm,
There to wander with her, its strange children among.

And what is the strain

We would gladly hear then ?

'Tis the cheering yo! yo! and the favouring gale,
That should sing through our rigging, and tighten our sail.

And 'tis more glorious still when, with light-hearted glee,
We in truth start to wander o'er land and o'er sea;
When the eye of the body roams, hoping to find
Things as fair as they seem'd to the eye of the mind.

And all may seem fair—and the eye may explore
With gladness what ne'er met its glances before;
But the heart aches to feel that the farther we roam,
The more sadly will Echo repeat the word "home!"

Then hark to this strain!

Let us hear it again—

'Tis a spell that can waft us o'er land and o'er sea;

Oh! hark to the strain!

Be it pleasure or pain,

That sends our hearts, Fatherland! throbbing to thee.

As a translation never fails to mar the original, it is but fair to believe that the young Sigismond's verses deserved, in part at least, the applause he received: but when they were ended, and that, resuming his flute, he again drew from it the sweet familiar notes so well known to every individual present except poor Edward, no word of praise followed them, but a tear stood trembling in every eye.

Karl dashed the foolish tell-tale from his cheek, exclaiming, as he filled his glass with Rhenish wine,

"Here's a health to our Fatherland! and a health to thee, too, thou dangerous minstrel of "Home;" but remember that at the next feast I give upon this "bit"—this only bit that I can ever hope to call mine, I will not invite you to share it unless you promise and make oath, before you take your place at the banquet, that you will sing no strain that shall send our hearts aching back to the land which our eyes can never see more."

Henrich had buried his face in his hands as they rested on his knees. Lotte's eyes seemed rooted in the earth, but her fair face bore no doubtful meaning. Steinmark's head sank upon his bosom; but it was an attitude not unusual with him when indulging the thick-coming fancies drawn from all things known and unknown in heaven and on earth. Hermann, however, as usual, sat very near him, and was aware that that noble and gentle bosom heaved with some painful emotion. Fritz caught the expression of his brother's eye, and understood in a moment that the impression made by his friend's song was becoming painful to nearly the whole party. Moved probably more by the wish to put a stop to this than from any sensation of vehement gaiety,

he exclaimed, "We have sung our songs—now let us dance our dance, and Mr. Bligh may fancy himself in Fatherland at once. Mother, you shall waltz with me! Lotte shall take Henrich for her partner, and Karl must make the best he can of Hermann; Sigismund shall play to us; and my father and Mr. Bligh sit in judgment on the performances of the whole party."

Fritz suited the action to the word, and springing on his feet, he bounded in a genuine waltzing step to the place where his mother sat. But she shook her head, saying, "No, no! Fritz, we can none of us waltz now. But come, boys, let us gather up the fragments of the feast and move homeward. Come, Lotte, love! The sun is getting low, and Americans though we be, we may get a chill if we sit here much longer."

The whole party was immediately put in action, and the bustle which ensued did much towards chasing the gloom that appeared to threaten them; but the young baron was by no means insensible to the effect his song had produced, and as they strolled slowly homeward, he could not resist the inclination he felt to ask Lotte if he were right in thinking that she had betrayed a more tender recollection of her native country than was likely to make her quite happy in her adopted one.

"I hope you are quite wrong," she replied with a smile, which was, however, followed by a sigh as she added: "It is Henrich who has infected me with this vain longing for a home that can never again be mine. But this is folly, if it be not worse. I fear even that my father remarked the unreasonable feeling your song produced. Indeed, Herr Hochland, you must sing no more such songs to us."

"Yet I would sing for ever," thought the young man, "could I so lure this matchless creature back to my native land." But he did not speak the thought, and the return of the party was much more silent and much less gay than their setting out. Frederick especially seemed to have lost his gentle, placid cheerfulness; and though he continued to converse with Edward with the same warmth of kindness as before, the spirit of his conversation was fled. The delicate-minded and sensitive Edward, though his knowledge of German was very imperfect, had caught and understood the feeling which had touched the hearts of the exiles while listening to the minstrelsy of their countryman; but he was far from conceiving how deeply the witnessing this feeling in his children had affected the heart of Frederick.

Steinmark had brought his family from Germany to America because he believed it to be the best thing he could do for them; and though some natural yearnings towards his native land had occasionally thrown a shade of melancholy over his solitary musings, he had

never conceived the idea that such meditations were shared by his light-hearted children. Still less did he imagine that these recollections; which he had never permitted himself to allude to, should, notwithstanding his caution, be the subject of deep and enduring regret to them all. Though Frederick Steinmark was more capable than most men of combating his own feelings, he had no such power when encountering those of his children, and the discovery he had just made oppressed him heavily, and he longed to be alone. Nevertheless, he remembered that it was some days since Edward had ventured to visit the poor prisoner, and he therefore detained him till, having seen the whole family safely established in the common sitting-room, he could take him safely to the loft in which he was concealed.

With cautious steps they threaded their way behind the outbuildings of the farm, and having entered an empty barn and secured the door behind them, they mounted the ladder that led to the little chamber above; but when they entered and looked round it, its sable tenant was no longer visible. Every hole and corner was examined, but in vain. However strange the fact appeared, it could not be doubted—Cæsar was gone.

"This is very strange, Bligh," said Steinmark; "so devotedly attached as this poor fellow appeared to you, is it possible that he should thus leave the asylum in which you had placed him without letting you know his intention?"

"It is not possible," replied Edward in a voice of great emotion. "The poor fellow has been traced and seized. Unhappy boy! his fate will be dreadful!"

"But surely, if this were the case, some of the people about the farm must have known it, Edward?—Remember that though it is just possible he might have been traced to the premises, it is not so that his pursuers should so exactly know where to find him as to render all search needless."

"But did they not choose their time well? Your whole family absent—your servants occupied at their mid-day meal perhaps. Alas! Mr. Steinmark, I have not a shadow of hope or doubt but that he is in the hands of his ferocious and remorseless enemies—My poor Cæsar!"

Steinmark answered not, but carefully examined the rough chamber in which they stood.

"It was here," he said at length, "that I always found him seated when I made my nightly visit to him: it was here I left him last night, a little after ten o'clock. He was in the habit, remember, of constantly employing the hours of his captivity either in reading the books I left with him, or in making the little wicker-baskets for

which he cut and prepared the materials with his knife. Had he been so employed when taken, should we not find some symptoms of the sudden interruption? But observe—here are the four volumes that I lent him, put carefully together upon this raster; and there is neither knife, basket, chip, nor stick of any kind, to indicate that he was broken in upon during the hours of light and occupation. Observe, too, that there is no remnant of the food I brought him; and there was more than he would have eaten till the twenty-four hours were past. In short, improbable as it may appear, I am persuaded that Cæsar took his voluntary departure in the course of last night; and that, unless he encounters some mischance, we shall probably find him here again as unexpectedly as we have lost him."

"He is most madly rash, then," replied Edward, who, while almost convinced by the reasonings of Steinmark, found but little to console him in admitting the result. "They tell me that dogs are used to hunt down the unhappy runaways; and if so, the poor fellow's power of gliding on his belly, like a snake among the bushes, will not long avail him. But it is useless to meditate upon the dangers into which he may have thrown himself. I cannot thank you, sir,—I cannot thank you as I ought to do, for all your generous kindness to him—and to me. Let me not longer detain you from your family! Farewell!"

"Stay, Edward!" exclaimed Steinmark, retaining the hand extended to him. "Why should you leave us? Cæsar is gone, and therefore my roof is no longer a dangerous one to you. Return with me to the house, and after supper we will give you a gayer song than that with which the young traveller regaled us to-day."

Nothing could so soon have restored the usually even spirits of Frederick Steinmark to their tone, as perceiving that Edward had need of cheering kindness to support him under the anxiety he felt for Cæsar; but though poor Bligh felt to his heart's core the sincerity and benevolence of the invitation, and though there was something more at his heart, perhaps stronger still, which prompted him to accept it, he was conscious that such heavy sadness rested upon him as must render him more a burden than an acquisition to his new friends. There was not one of them, not excepting the young baron, who had not repeatedly during the day demonstrated the most cordial desire to make it pleasant to him; and not an accent, not a movement, which testified this good-will, but had been felt and appreciated by its object: but poor Edward's very soul had been shaken by the emotions of this eventful day. He knew not what to make of the strange battling of contradictory impulses within him. Never till this day had he been addressed in a voice of kindness to which his own voice had not responded cheerfully: but when young Sigismond had courteously

attempted to draw him into conversation, a something within him seemed to make him shrink from the frank and graceful young man almost with loathing. When Lotte spoke to him, and with her gentle, kindly smile sought to draw him into the family circle, the effect was stranger still. When she spoke to another, his life seemed to hang upon her accents; when she looked at another, the light appeared to have passed from his eyes, and a deep shadow to overcast the spot on which he stood: but no sooner was he himself the object either of her words or her glances, than his presence of mind utterly failed him, and he no longer clearly knew what he did, nor what he said. It had been a day of torment and of pleasure such as he had never known; but he had no strength to renew these overwhelming emotions, and after the hesitation of a moment, he answered:

"God bless you, Mr. Steinmark, for all your goodness!—but not now, not to-night: another time, if you do not grow weary of me and my troubles, I will venture to come amongst you,—though I fear I can be but a kill-joy at any time."

"You do not do us justice, Edward," returned Steinmark warmly. "If you esteemed me and mine as perfectly as we esteem you, it would be impossible for you to think that your sorrows were a burden that we would not one and all gladly aid you to bear and to cure."

"Nor do I doubt it, my dear and honoured friend; but there is a weakness of spirit almost too tender to bear the touch of kindness. Forgive my wayward folly, and—think me not ungrateful!"

"Do not fear it, Edward—You are hardly fit for this working-day world, my friend; but could I shape your destiny, trust me, it should be such as to soothe, and not wound your nature. Good night? and remember, the sooner we see you again, the more welcome you will be."

Frederick Steinmark then returned into the house, and Edward Bligh took the winding path through the forest that led towards his home.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE day after old Juno had succeeded in rescuing Phebe from the immediate vengeance of Whittlaw, it happened, while he and his patron Colonel Dart were comfortably seated at breakfast, amicably discoursing upon the number of stripes that a female slave might safely receive without permanent injury to herself or her future progeny, they were startled by the sudden appearance of the old woman and her

bamboo, standing under the flowery portico, within a foot of the window at which they sat.

"What the devil brings her here?" muttered the colonel to his confidential clerk. But at the same instant he rose from his chair, and presenting her with a fresh-buttered roll delicately spread with fine honey—a morsel just prepared for his own eating—he addressed her coaxingly with. "Well now, good Juno, you know that you are always welcome, come when you will. What news stirring, Juno?—what news?"

This queer mixture of fraud, fun, and feeling, never enjoyed herself more than when she saw the savage, blood-thirsty Colonel Dart fawning upon her as gently as a lamb when bleating to its mother for food. She knew—for her comfort—that she had been his torment and his torture for the fifteen years that he had possessed the estate, making him dream by night and meditate by day on plots, poisonings, and assassinations without end.

"May the pretty spirits that are chirping round old Juno keep the master of all from harm!" she replied, accepting the dainty morsel; and seating herself deliberately on the wooden pediment of the iron column which supported the roof the portico, she began to eat it without appearing to pay the least attention to the still standing colonel or his confidential clerk, who had also arisen from his chair with considerable anxiety to hear what she had to say.

The more mysteriously impertinent old Juno was, the more submissive and tractable did the colonel invariably become; and when having about half eaten her roll, she raised her eyes and her bamboo, and said, as if addressing some object above her head, "Coffee! coffee! coffee!" the zealous believer seized hastily on the silver biggen, exclaiming as he began to pour out the fragrant contents:

"Sugar and cream, Whitlaw! D—n your eyes! can't you give me the sugar and cream?"

"Voice of truth,
The heart of ruth
Deserves to hear
Distinct and clear,"

said Juno, solemnly and complacently, as she received her cup of coffee; and having drunk it without any symptom of haste, and finished eating her roll with the same steady equanimity, she rose from her seat, and standing in her ordinary attitude, with her two hands crossed, and resting on the top of her bamboo, she said: "Now, master of many slaves, and faithful servant of the powers of air, listen to Juno. Deep and terrible are the thoughts that are rolling at this moment through the souls of Louisianian slaves,—dark as their skin, and frightful as their chains. Juno knows all; and had you met her with

a surly oath, as once in days of yore, when she came to show you that the bright fountain which rose and sparkled as if proud to meet your wants—when she came in the darkness of night to tell you that fountain was poisoned,—had you met her now as you did then, a dozen negro fists should be playing on your windpipe ere Juno would have told you one word of the matter.

Colonel Dart turned very pale, and Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw found out a glass of rum and swallowed it.

“Ay, ay, young master,” said Juno, with a smile that came direct from her heart, where her spirit was laughing merrily, “that rum is cheering, but the cane that gave it is watered, if the poet say true, with negro tears.—What then?” she continued, pointing her wand towards the sky, and appearing to aim it first at one and then at another of the airy beings she always appeared to see about her,—“What then?—Power is power, and strength is strength; and the low must fall lower, and the high must mount higher, before all is done. You are high, Colonel Dart—you are very high, powerful, mighty, and greatly to be considered by slaves and freemen both. And you!” she continued wildly, fixing her eyes with a look of phrenzy on Whitlaw, and then bursting forth into croaking song,—

“You too are high, high!
But methinks I can spy,
That yet ere you die,
You will mount still, and fly
'Twixt the earth and the sky,
Till the welkin shall ring merrily, merrily!”

“What does she mean, Whitlaw?” said the colonel, in an accent that denoted both a puzzled state of mind and an anxious spirit.

“It’s hard to say justly, colonel,” answered his confidential clerk, “she’s so unaccountable queer; but I guess,” he continued, as the bumper of rum strengthened and cheered the pulsations of his heart, —“I guess that she means I shall come to riches and power before I die.”

“I dont know,” said the colonel doubtfully; “I expect there’s two —”

“Whew! whew!” whistled the old woman shrilly through a hole that was pierced in her bamboo. “Hist, hist, hist!—here they come, here they come!”

“Could you see them—and hear!
Now they’re far—now they’re near!
They have tidings to tell,
Newly whisper’d in hell!
Ay!—I hear what you say;
But I am but weak clay,
And must pause ere I dare
These dire horrors declare.”

Her voice sunk as she pronounced the last words, and she appeared completely exhausted.

"Give her rum, Whittlaw!" cried the colonel, trembling too violently to do it himself. "Why the devil, sir, can't you give her a glass of rum?"

Whittlaw obeyed, and the old woman eagerly swallowed the cordial.

"It is well!" she cried, apparently reviving. "That was a lucky thought; or Juno might have perished ere her noble master got his warning."

"What warning, Juno?" said the colonel in very gentle accents, and evidently relieved at hearing his tormentor speak in tones of less immediate inspiration. "Come in, and sit down comfortably, Juno; and, in God's name, tell me what you have got to say."

"In God's name, massa?—No, no, no, no,—not in God's name!—Please, massa, not in God's name!—In the name of Juno's spirits,—in the name of the green birds that be visible, and the birds of golden light that be not—save only to old Juno;—in the name of these say, master—in the name of these, and Juno will tell you all!"

"In the name of what you will, woman—in the name of the devil, if it must be so,—only tell me all you know."

"The devil?" said Juno, shaking her head, while a strangely malicious smile twinkled unobserved in her eyes. "The devil is the prince of darkness; but, dark or light, he is a prince, so 'tis fitting to speak of him with respect; 'cause I was told in my youth that not even the great Washington could release us from his parliament. And so, massa," she added, resuming her whining negro tone, "please to say, in the name of Juno's spirits."

Whittlaw stamped (aside) with his feet; but the colonel deliberately uttered, "In the name of your spirits, Juno, tell me what you have heard respecting the Louisianian slaves."

As if propitiated by this obedience, the old woman began without farther grimace to explain in good intelligible English the object of her visit.

"It matters little, master, and that you know by this time, where Juno gets her knowledge. How many a time have you gone to the right at my bidding, when if you had gone to the left, your life would have paid for your disobedience! And how often at dead of night have I brought you tidings of the death of a slave, who if he had lived four-and-twenty hours longer, would have laid low the head of him who is master of all! Is not this true, Colonel Dart?—is not this true as the spirits of the air are true?"

"I should be ungrateful to deny it, good Juno," replied the docile coward: "and you won't deny, will you, that I have always been grateful for your watching over me? I do believe, Juno, that you have

found the way of sending many a rogue out of this world, who if he had remained in it, would have done my business for me, one way or another."

"Ay, ay! it were best you did not doubt that, colonel, though you are master of all," replied the old woman, with another comical twinkle of her eyes. "But listen! Time presses; and the present moment lost, the future will never restore it. There is at this hour in Orleans a dark and dreadful conspiracy, which if not smothered before it sees the light, will leave no white man alive within the State. I am no traitress, mark me! I would not have even you think that; though I know," continued the artful old woman, "that your generosity might find an excuse for it if I were. But I am no traitress; no one has trusted me—at least no earthly one has trusted me, and therefore I betray none. You, my master, must remain with your own; the taint has not yet reached them, and at the present moment you are safe. But this young man here, whom you have made to understand your wants and wishes, this young master Whitlaw, whose zeal is equal to your own, and who looks forward, as all noble spirits should do, to obtain an exalted situation before he dies,—let him go to New Orleans. Spare not your purse, Colonel Dart, or your blood may flow instead of your dollars: let this young man set off to-morrow for New Orleans. When arrived there, I will take care that it shall be given him to know what he is to do. Will you do this, master, on the strength of Juno's word?"

"What say you, Whitlaw?" said the colonel, turning to him. "It is certainly no joke to hear of such goings on, so near, and yet to know so devilish little about it. Are you up to this, my boy? Say yes, and by G—I'll roll out as many dollars as you can spend."

The heart of Whitlaw beat high. The idea of a trip to New Orleans, with plenty of money to spend, seemed to his imagination like a glimpse at paradise; but, with his wonted discretion, he took care that no symptom of this feeling should appear on his countenance.

"I expect, colonel," he replied sedately, "that I shall be after doing whatever you wish in this matter; but it's no joke neither, I guess, to run one's head into such a wasp's nest as New Orleans must be at this present, if all she says is true."

Juno watched his countenance keenly as he spoke; and her eye, long accustomed to read that index of men's thoughts ever to be found in their faces by those who know how to look for it, detected his extreme satisfaction under the mask of indifference he tried to put on.

"Does your heart fail you, Master Whitlaw? If it does, say so. But do not pretend to doubt the word of Juno. There is no need for you to go to New Orleans, Master Whitlaw—I will find another to do the work.

"No, no, good Juno," said the young man promptly; "it is my

duty to do whatever the colonel wants done; and if New Orleans was on fire from end to end, I'm the man that would walk through it at his bidding. So I'm ready to start, colonel, to-morrow, or to-day either if you like it better."

"You're the man for these times, Whittlaw, and none but you—that's a fact. I calculate that to-morrow will do, Juno? The Tecumsah goes down to-morrow, I know; and that's the steamer I support,—the captain keeps me in cigars. But you're sure he'll know what to do when he gets there, Juno?"

"Did Juno ever promise to give you a warning and fail? Tell me that, master."

"Never, my good friend—never. Another glass of rum, Juno, and then be off—I've lots of letters to write."

Juno took the offered glass in silence, and then retreating by the window at which she had entered, and giving a sort of farewell wave with her wand, she disappeared.

For some minutes after her departure the colonel and his confidential clerk sat opposite to each other in silence, both desirous to escape making the first observation upon the extraordinary visit they had received. But the perseverance of Whittlaw beat the colonel's patience, and he broke out with sundry contradictory exclamations. "Cursed witch!—where the devil could she learn all this? But I never caught her out in tricking me yet.—I say, Whittlaw, we should be stumped considerable if we found out, after all, 'twas but a flam—hey?"

Whittlaw trembled for his visit to that land of promise New Orleans, and all the glorious joys that the colonel's dollars would procure him there. In answer therefore to this appeal, he shook his head, and said with much solemnity, "Colonel Dart, that woman is of no common breed—I have witnessed her power and her fore-knowledge before to-day. This expedition that she advises is not without peril; but peril must be stood to in time of need. You've behaved nobly by me, and let me be flogged like a nigger if I show a white feather in the matter! Let us take the witch at her word, colonel, and do her bidding now if we never do it again. God help me! but it makes one's blood run cold to hear her! How soon did she say we should all be murdered in our beds if we neglected the warning?"

Whittlaw here touched the right string. "Hold your tongue, in the devil's name!" cried the colonel pettishly, while a cold shiver ran through his limbs. "What's the use, Whittlaw, of sitting here croaking over her d—d news, when you've got to get your plunder together, and I've so many letters to write to them as I shall want you to question?—besides counting the dollars out. The queer hag told me not to spare—and she's right there too,—what's a bag of dollars compared to one's life?"

This was a sentiment in which Mr. Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw agreed most cordially; but it was with his usual prudence that he indicated this—only shrugging his shoulders, and again shaking his head very solemnly.

Notwithstanding his well-placed confidence on the liberality of the terrified colonel, Whitlaw thought that it would be extremely wrong to miss such an opportunity of getting a little ready cash from his very prosperous father; he had also some curiosity to hear a little gossip about Lotte from Aunt Cli; so telling his patron that he had business with his father which must be attended to before he set off, he took his leave of him, and mounting the horse kept for his use, proceeded immediately to Mount Etna.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE evidently increasing wealth of old Whitlaw was by no means overlooked by his careful son, who, notwithstanding the luxury and dignity in which he lived as the acknowledged favourite of his patron, had lately thought it worth his while occasionally to pay his compliments at Mount Etna. Neither was his childish attachment to his adoring Aunt Clio altogether worn out.

Whether it were that, strong as appearances seemed against it, our hero really had some slight mixture of vulgar human feelings at his heart, or that the effect was produced solely by the gratification which even poor Clio's simple admiration afforded his vanity, it is certain that he always did say, "Where's Aunt Cli?" within five minutes after he had seated himself on the fine horse-hair sofa in his step-mother's grand keeping-room. To Clio the arrival of her Jonathan Jefferson was like sunshine after long rain, or rain after long sunshine, or any other most longed-for visitation.

The entire aspect of Mount Etna was changed since first the Whitlaw family unpacked themselves and their plunder before the door of the little mansion. By gradual and regularly increasing growth, this very moderate-sized tenement was become a stately, staring store, with a substantial house attached to it. There certainly was not any individual in the family at all aware of the fact, though fact it was, that poor Clio was in reality the mainspring of this prosperity. The niggers that Mrs. Whitlaw brought with her as her marriage portion certainly contributed to the rapid clearing of the ground; but it was Clio's unwearied hands that converted into prime bacon the herds of well-fattened hogs fed on the corn which grew there. If it was the im-

perious Whittlaw himself who contrived to make such capital ready-money bargains for Havannah cigars at New Orleans that he could undersell all Natchez, it was Clio who took care that there should be no crumbling or crushing among them till the very last of every successive batch was sold. It was Clio who roasted the coffee better than ever coffee was roasted before, with which she supplied all the retail customers for many a mile round; for "who would not walk a spell more, to have coffee done fixed so slick as Clio's?" In a word, there was no part of Mr. Jonathan Whittlaw's extensive retail concern which did not benefit by the watchful eye, the active hand, and the unwearied patient industry of Clio. In return, she was lodged, fed, and clothed; and what, as Mrs. Whittlaw observed, could any human want more?"

As Jonathan Jefferson approached the paternal dwelling, he perceived his Aunt Cli in the act of lugging out, with great difficulty, a vast tub of "prime chewing tobacco," from amidst many other heavy concerns piled up beside the door. Some men, under such circumstances, might have stepped forward to help her, and he could easily have done by one slight effort what it cost her many to achieve; but young Whittlaw reasoned differently. He was himself exceedingly well-dressed, and had perfectly the air of a man of first-rate Natchez fashion, whereas his Aunt Cli really looked as if she had been hard at work since sunrise; so he turned off, before her eyes, which were steadfastly fixed upon the chewing tobacco, had caught a glimpse of what they best loved to look upon, and skirting round a good-sized garden that spread before the whole front of the house, excepting the always open store, he made good his entry through a covered porch to the north, which led into Mrs. Whittlaw's best parlour.

The lady was occupied there in clear-starching some of her own particularly favourite caps and other finery; but the employment was redeemed from every appearance of degrading industry by the presence of two slaves. One of these, a young girl of fourteen, was endeavouring with all her heart and soul to content her lean and slippered liege lady by *clapping*, as it is technically called, a lace veil, the clearness and beauty of which altogether depended, as Mrs. Whittlaw said, upon the force and rapidity with which "the nasty, lazy, nigger smut" performed the operation; and "Quicker, harder, can't you? you beastly, nigger idiot, you!" rang in the trembling girl's ears, as a prologue to the beating she knew she should get if she did not immediately display considerably more skill and strength than she possessed.

The other slave was a little girl of about eight, who, while holding a basin of starch with nervous firmness between her two little hands, stood with her eyes anxiously fixed upon her sister, whose abortive ef-

forts in the mystery of clear-starching seemed so likely to bring her to sorrow and shame.

"My! — Jonathan Jefferson! is that you?" exclaimed the lady, changing her tone from scolding to coaxing: for, having no offspring of her own, Mrs. Whitlaw was exceedingly proud of her elegant step-son; and as he by no means overwhelmed her with his company, she always welcomed him in the most flattering manner imaginable.

"Morning, mother," returned the young man. "Where's Aunt Cli?"

We have already seen that Jonathan Jefferson knew perfectly well where Aunt Cli was; but the phrase was always understood to mean, "bring her in directly."

"Oh! for sure you shall see her in no time. Jericho bob! what a pretty waistcoat that is! Why should not my Mr. Whitlaw wear something like that now? I must say, that considering I was an heiress, I do think Mr. Whitlaw should be a little more of a beau: don't you think so, Jonathan Jefferson?"

"Where's Aunt Cli?" reiterated our hero, without taking any notice either of the compliment or the question.

"Why can't you budge, you everlasting nigger, you, and fetch Miss Cli, instead of standing staring there, as if you had never seen a white man before?"

This was addressed to the younger of the two girls, who, carefully setting down the basin she held, darted out of the room, as if right glad of the errand that dismissed her.

"Well now, Jonathan Jefferson, I hope you have got some news for me. I do live in the woods, I guess, if ever woman did. Is it true that Miss Mapleton is going to be married to Squire Dickson? Why, he is old enough to be her grandfather."

"Where's Aunt Cli?" was the only answer this civil attempt at conversation received.

"My! — Isn't a nigger a born fool, Jonathan Jefferson? Go, you black idiot, and tell your sister Venus she shall be flogged at sundown, for not sending Miss Cli here; and go into the store yourself, you black beetle, and tell her who's here: that will bring her fast enough, Jonathan Jefferson. Leave go the veil, you clumsy beast,—that must be done all over again; so there's three hours more clapping for your pretty white hands, Miss Lily." Here Mrs. Whitlaw laughed a little laugh peculiarly her own. "Mr. Whitlaw dined at the Eagle to-day, Jonathan Jefferson; but if they don't drink over common, he'll be back in a jiffy. There's fine junketings going on over at Steinmark's," continued the conversable lady. "Have you heard the news at Natchez?"

"What news?" said the young man sulkily.

"My! — Then you haven't heard it! Why they do say that the chit of a girl that does all the work of the house, 'cause, as you well know, they won't afford themselves a single nigger,—they do say that she is going to be married to a lord—ay, Jonathan Jefferson, you may stare sure enough!—a cretur that I know has churned butter with her own hands like a right-down born blackamoor; but Miss Cli says that for certain it is so."

"Did the girl tell her so?" said our hero, colouring.

"I don't know exactly for that; but there have been people unaccountable in the store, who all declare, Miss Cli says, that they know it for certain truth."

"D——d lies, for all that," said young Whittlaw. "Have they been sitting abrood upon cuckoo's rotten eggs, and so hatched a lord?"

"Oh! as for having the lord there, that's not the difficulty, for there he is sure enough, a most unaccountable beauty of a man, for I've see'd him myself. But who'll go to believe, Jonathan Jefferson, that a girl what never had a nigger to wait upon her, but did slave's work herself, should be made a wife of by such a person as that? Believe it who will, I won't."

"And pray where did this lord come from? 'Tis but rare one hears of any of the kind at New Orleans; and 'tis likely, to be sure, that one should be found out in the woods at Reichland! Flam—cursed, lying flam!"

"That's just your 'cuteness, Jonathan Jefferson. I was desperately tickled myself at the notion; and now I hear you, I see straight through it at once."

At this moment the good Cli entered; and though she had for some time past been schooled into the necessity of not hugging and kissing her darling, her affectionate heart nevertheless found means of showing how greatly she loved him.

"My boy! my darling boy!" she exclaimed as she burst into the room with her hands clasped firmly together, as if to prevent their following their natural impulse to inclose his neck; "if he arn't more beautiful than ever! Why, Jonathan—why for arn't you President already? Don't he look grand, sister Whittlaw?"

The youth condescended to smile at the raptures of his aunt, and even ventured to shake hands with her; a familiarity in which he rarely indulged since his residence at Paradise Plantation, except with very distinguished planters, and their white sons and daughters.

The unwonted kindness quite overset poor Cli, making her forget all the teaching she had received, and all her good resolutions to obey that sternest of injunctions, never again to kiss her boy. She caught the hand he extended between both her own, and covered it with

kisses; sobbing out as she did so, "Forgive me, forgive me, my blessing, this one time,—only this one time! Did ever eyes behold such a beauty, hands and all?"

"Don't be a fool, Aunt Cli," said the object of this tender love, "but step out for a spell with me into the garden: I want to talk to you."

"God bless your dear tongue for saying it, Jonathan! But the store, darling! what will father say if the store's left? 'Tis unaccountable the custom we gets, Jonathan, and it must be minded."

"Then let's sit down just where father smokes, in full sight of it; and if the folks come, why you must go, that's a fact, Aunt Cli.—Well now," he continued, as soon as they had reached the smoking retreat of Whitlaw senior, which was situated in a corner of the garden that commanded a full view of the entrance to the store, as well as the approach to it,—“Well now, Aunt Cli, I want you to tell me what it is that foolish woman, that stepmother of mine, has got into her head about Lotte Steinmark being married to a lord. It's all stuff, isn't it, Aunt Cli?"

"I thought you had clean forgot Lotte altogether, my darling," said Cli in a tone of anxiety.

"Forget her! what do you mean? You don't fancy I care for the girl, do you? Not I, a copper, upon my soul. 'Twas only for the sake of hearing some of your country news that I asked."

"That's right, then, Jonathan dear. Well, then, I'll tell you all about it. You remember the eldest son, don't you, Jonathan? you must remember Fritz? Well, you know, he's been a good spell at Philadelphia, making, they do say, an accountable sight of money. Well, he made friends there with a lord—a real lord from over the sea, and so he brought him home to Reichland with him, and so he fell right down in love with Lotte,—no wonder that, Jonathan, was it?—and so they are to be married right away; and the worst of all is, that pretty Lotte is to go away over the sea, and I shall never see her sweet face again."

"So then it's true, is it?"

"Yes, Jonathan, quite true; and I should be joyful at her being made so grand, if it wasn't for the never seeing her again."

"I wish I had the settling them, one and all," said young Whitlaw, muttering through his teeth.

"What d'ye say, Jonathan dear?" inquired Cli innocently.

"No matter, Aunt Cli. What's this lord like? have you seen him?"

"Yes, sure have I. They came, I don't know how many of them, and he along, to buy notions at our store; and one of the nigger girls told sister Whitlaw, and she comed herself into the store to have a look

at him, and that's what she don't do twice in a year. Howsomever, she said she was paid that time anyhow, for she said the young lord was a glory to look at."

"What everlasting stuff you do talk, Aunt Cli!" cried the young man, rising from his seat. "What do you know about lords? Will he buy the gal a nigger to slave it for her? Beggarly set the whole of 'em! I wouldn't give a levy a dozen for the best lords they're likely to pick up! A likely story!—an oversea lord come to Louisiana, and choose a wife from a house where there isn't a slave kept! I've no great faith in lords from foreign parts, but I expect they arn't altogether so mean as that neither."

"Well now, Jonathan dear, I calculate you know better than I do about all things, so I dare say you are right, and we shall keep our pretty Lotte after all. What would I give, Jonathan, if you would make up your mind to marry her yourself!"

"How your head does run upon marrying! But that's always the way with old maids!"

A short pause succeeded, which was broken by Jonathan's saying,

"How's the cash-box, Aunt Cli? I must have some money, that's a fact. I'm going a journey to New Orlines, and I shall be stumped outright if father won't come down with a little of the ready."

"To be sure he will, my darling; but you know, Jonathan, 'tis he's got the money, and he's away to the Eagle. But art thee going to New Orlines, Jonathan? My—! what a sight you will know by time you're as old as me!—And how many weeks will it be afore you set out?—not till the fever time's over, mind that, Jonathan."

"A fig for the fever, Aunt Cli!—business is business,—and I'm off for Orlines to-morrow. So send one of your black varment to the Eagle, and tell the old one he's wanted."

"But, Jonathan, maybe his dander will be up if we sends after him that fashion; and that's no way to get at the dollars. Maybe, darling, you'd best be going over to the Eagle yourself; and he'll be proud, I'm thinking, to see you among all the people, looking so grand, like as you do, my beauty. I guess he'll never have the heart to refuse you if you ask, then."

Young Jonathan appeared to approve the suggestion, and customers approaching the store at the moment, the aunt and nephew parted; she bustling up to perform her wonted duty, and he striding off by a short cut across the grounds to make an experiment upon his father's heart and purse.

He had just reached the limit of the Mount Etna land, and was in the act of stepping over the high zig-zag fence which surrounded it, when Lotte Steinmark, Henrich, and the Baron Hochland appeared in sight. They were approaching the spot where he stood, and a mixed

feeling of curiosity and insolence induced him to remain there till they came up, instead of crossing the road in the direction in which he was going.

His intention at first was simply to give the party a "good stare ;" but Lotte looked so very lovely as she drew near, that almost involuntarily he walked up to them, and touching his hat, said, " Good afternoon to you, Miss Lotte."

The young baron, from habitual good breeding, touched his hat in return ; but Henrich, on whose arm his sister was leaning, hurried forward without taking any notice of the salutation. Lotte's beautiful colour deepened and mounted to her temples ; but she bowed, though very slightly, and, without speaking, obeyed the impulse of her brother and walked on.

Whitlaw stood immovable for several minutes, watching their progress, and then exclaimed in a sort of growling whisper,

"Curses light upon them all !—If I could but live to be revenged for their infernal insolence, I would be contented to die the hour after !"

A mocking-bird that was perched on a tree by the road-side caught the cadence of the curse, and repeated it. Whitlaw seized a stone and aimed it at the bird, but it missed him. A passionate oath burst from his lips as he pursued his way ; but he soothed his spirit by a silent vow to this effect—*that when he raised his hand to smite the Steinmark race, it should not be raised in vain.* He then proceeded in search of his father, and having found him, contrived, by some of the means he had long successfully practised, to extract from him a portion of that hoarded wealth, the entire possession of which he looked forward to with equal confidence and impatience. Perhaps,

" Malignant Fate sat by and smiled."

But with this we have nothing to do at present : it is enough for us to know, that having concluded his business in a very satisfactory manner, Mr. Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw took a hasty leave of the ladies of the establishment, and mounting his horse, returned in excellent spirits to Paradise Plantation.

CHAPTER XXV.

AT an early hour of the afternoon on the following day, the noble Tocumseh steam-boat hove-to beneath the bluff of Natchez. Before the different ceremonies of wooding, getting bread, milk, eggs, butter,

chickens, and turkeys aboard, was completed, Whittlaw was seen gaily approaching the landing-place, followed by two of Colonel Dart's negroes carrying his baggage.

A stunted juniper grows upon the top of a little grassy knoll that rises close behind the handsomely ranged cords of wood which stand ever ready for loading beside the wharf. Within the shelter and the shade of this low tree sat Juno. She silently watched the approach of Whittlaw to the water's edge; and when, after seeing his luggage in, he stepped on board himself, she rose to her feet as if her business were finished and she meant to depart. But some few minutes elapsed before the last stragglers arrived, and during this time the old woman lingered on the green hill's side, mounting now and then by a step at a time, but taken backwards, with her eyes still fixed on the Tecumseh. At length the paddles began to play, a burst of black smoke covered the retreat of the hissing steam now sent to do its duty, and the vast fabric glided away from the bank. Juno waved her bamboo in the air as if to bid it farewell; then turning away from the river, she slowly mounted the steep ascent that led to Natchez.

While Whittlaw, in high spirits, and resolving numberless schemes of profit and of pleasure, is borne gaily and rapidly along towards New Orleans, we must retrograde a little, in order to trace old Juno through a few of her recent manœuvres, that we may be able to comprehend the events to which they ultimately led.

It must be remembered that the scene at Colonel Dart's breakfast-table, though recorded only in the last chapter, occurred the morning after Juno's first introduction to the reader, when her unexpected appearance at the door of Peggy's hut put a stop to the outrage about to be perpetrated on the unhappy Phebe.

A few hours only before her well-timed entrance there, she had arrived on the deck of a steam-boat from New Orleans, which she had just visited on one of the wild intriguing schemes with which she perpetually amused herself, and mystified her master. But upon this occasion, however, it must be confessed, that feelings of good-nature and kindness were blended with her master passion for trickery and influence.

It may be necessary to remark, that Juno's authority among her own race was by no means confined to her five hundred comrades on Paradise Plantation. Her singular education and acquirements, together with her long residence at Orleans, and the station (the highest amongst slaves) that she so repeatedly held there, had made her known and revered throughout the whole black population. It was, moreover, well known among them that she was the progenitor of a white and beautiful free race in England; and this gave her a degree of importance in their

eyes which added not a little to her extravagant assumption of dignity, while it certainly tended greatly to console her for all the sorrows and sufferings she had endured.

Besides these traditional claims to respect, Juno by some means or other was always well furnished with money : she constantly lodged herself decently during her visits to New Orleans, and said nothing to contradict the idea which appeared to prevail among her old associates, that she had at length obtained her freedom. She had never found any difficulty, therefore, in keeping up an intercourse with several of the best-informed of the coloured population, giving them to understand, that it was of great importance to the well-being of the negroes in her own neighbourhood that all intelligence in any way connected with their race should be transmitted to her.

The unchecked license for wandering where, when, and how she chose, which had long been tacitly accorded either to her supernatural pretensions or to her useless age, enabled her to go and to stay as far and as long as she liked ; and perhaps no one on the estate to which she belonged was more easily persuaded to believe that these wanderings were connected with the behests of some of her aerial acquaintance than Colonel Dart himself. On this point she did in truth " fool him to the top of his bent ;" often finding her way to and from New Orleans, and then delivering to him in the shape of prophecy all that she picked up that was likely afterwards to reach him concerning any riots or evasions among the wretched multitude who groaned in chains within its precincts.

It was in the good-natured hope of bringing together her young favourite Phebe and the lover whose loss she so pathetically mourned, which had induced the old woman to make this last excursion to New Orleans. She had long ago determined to save her protégée from the hateful pursuit of Whittlaw, whenever it should appear necessary, by sending him off on a fool's errand in pursuit of news for his patron ; but before she did this, she thought fit to pay a visit to Cæsar, partly to ascertain whether he kept faith towards his early love as truly as poor Phebe to him, and partly to arrange with him the best mode of setting to work for the purpose of effecting for him a change of masters. She found the poor fellow quite as attached and as constant as Phebe described him to be, and ready on his part to do whatever his good angel Juno directed. Her orders were, that he should give gradual indications of declining health and strength, which would beyond all doubt make his master anxious to part with him,—the selling a sick slave being a favourite species of jockeyship among planters ; and, meanwhile, it was her intention to inform her own master that his safety depended on the purchase of a certain sickly slave named Cæsar, who

if once in his possession and settled on the property, would, for certain reasons that she was forbidden to mention, prevent any conspiracy from ever touching his life or property.

All this was very cleverly arranged between the old woman and the young lover on the first day that she made her way into the factory where he was employed; and it is highly probable that her scheme would have answered completely, had not the unfortunate young man, on the day following this visit, been detected in the act of teaching a brother slave to read.

It was but for one short instant after this detection, and that a very dangerous one, that Juno found means of speaking to him. She had then uttered the words "Run!—Natchez way!"—a piece of advice which he speedily followed. His actual arrival in the forest, however, was for some time unknown to her, or she would probably have been able to afford him a shelter both more to his taste and more perfectly secure than the loft of Frederick Steinmark.

Though thus sadly defeated in her project of bringing the lovers together as the property of one owner, she persevered in her resolution of sending Whittlaw off, little doubting that a short residence at New Orleans would cause him to forget the black beauty of Paradise Plantation. How well she succeeded in bringing this about we have already seen.

No sooner had his confidential clerk left him, than Colonel Dart, more than ever terrified by the predictions of his sable prophetess, summoned three of the white overseers, in whom he thought he could most confide, and promised to give each of them a dollar a night provided they would undertake in turn to patrol the negro villages and the forest adjoining during the hours of darkness, and bring him tidings in the morning if any movement appeared among the black people.

No sooner had Juno returned from the wharf at Natchez, which she had visited for the satisfaction of knowing with certainty that the confidential clerk had departed, than she heard of this precaution taken by the nervous colonel. It would, for very excellent reasons, have been extremely inconvenient to her, had it been attended to in the manner he expected: but Juno, who knew the character and conscience of every man and woman on the estate considerably better than they did themselves, felt tolerably well assured that those trusted and chosen for the watch would content themselves with spreading the alarm, and draw but little upon their downy slumbers for the protection of the much less certain repose of Colonel Dart.

The old woman, amongst many other general conclusions to which her keen observation had brought her, always took it for granted that a man's tenderness towards himself was in exact proportion to his in-

difference towards others. When she remarked an overseer more careless than ordinary about the accommodation of the gang under his charge, she felt sure that he was particularly well surrounded with snug comforts at home. If he lightly ordered punishment, or looked on with apathy while it was inflicted, she was convinced that he was well-furnished with precautions and consolations for all the aches and pains that flesh is heir to. But if it happened that she marked a fiendish pleasure gleam from the eye while watching the writhing of the victim under torture, then no shadow of doubt was left upon her mind that a species of self-worship, which guarded every avenue to pain, and abandoned every sense to gratification, would be found the only religion—but that carried to fanaticism—which possessed the soul.

It was in consequence of these observations and convictions which resulted from them, that Juno felt persuaded there would be little to dread from the watchfulness of the persons selected by Colonel Dart. Nevertheless, in case either of the trio might commission a wife or child to keep watch while he slept, she thought fit to use her influence with the poor Christian people who attended Edward Bligh's Sabbath night's prayer, to prevent their assembling round him on the following Sunday.

Having taken this precaution, and lain in wait at the place of meeting in order to announce it to the young preacher, she returned to the lone hut she had been permitted to fabricate for her own especial use, and having carefully secured herself within it, raised a trap-door concealed beneath her bed, and gave liberty to Phebe, who, for the greater part of every day since Whitlaw left her in the charge of Juno, had remained a prisoner in a subterraneous retreat, which, though wonderful both in size and accommodation considering how and by whom it was made, nevertheless afforded but a sorry habitation for so long a period. Joyfully and gratefully, however, had Phebe submitted to it; and when Juno announced that her imprisonment was at an end, her first impulse was not to rejoice in her recovered freedom, but to ask if there were no danger that it might throw her again into the power of Whitlaw.

"No, no, deary—no, no," replied the old woman laughing heartily: "the pretty youth is steaming away towards New Orleans, where, if my prayers are heard, he will be fleeced at a gaming-table and shot in a brawl. But, at any rate, my little Phebe, you are clear of him: and if, when he comes back, he should take the same fancy into his head again, why then old Juno will send him scudding off farther and wider still—or never believe her more."

"And Cæsar, Juno?" said Phebe mournfully, "what can your skill do for him? Do you believe that he has taken your terrible advice and run away?"

"I hope so—I hope so, girl. Terrible advice!—pretty gratitude that, isn't it now? Are you not ashamed, Phebe, to speak to me so?"

"My dear Juno! do not be mad with me for that. Day and night, night and day since you told me, what can I have been about; think you, but fancying how it was with him?"

"Like enough, dear; I know what that means—I have had something of the sort myself maybe in the days that are gone. But look you, Phebe, you must have trust in me. I won't tell you, as I do those idiot cowards at the house, that I and the dicky-birds sit in council together as to what will next come to pass—ha! ha! ha!—Isn't that glorious? Isn't it worth while to live a slave for threescore years and ten, for the joy of seeing the little colonel's face pucker, and his bits of eyes stare, and his black teeth chatter, when I hold up my old bamboo and talk gibberish? ha! ha! ha! ha!—Oh, Phebe, that's something!"

"No, Juno, no," replied Phebe, "you will not talk such stuff to me: but if you know—alas! you cannot know anything about him."

"Know?" said the old woman, musing: "in real truth, Phebe, I sometimes can hardly tell what I know and what I do not. I don't want to bamboozle you, my dear child, God is my witness, any more than I would want to bamboozle my own brain; but I do think now and then that I know things that others don't."

"And no wonder, Juno," replied the girl with great simplicity; "for while other folks work, you look about and listen,—and that's the reason, I expect, that you know so much."

"Partly, partly, Phebe—but that's not quite all neither. I don't justly know myself how it is; but often and often when I see a thing or hear a thing, I don't stop short at knowing just what that tells me, but, almost without thinking of it, on I go judging what must be after, as if the spirits I tell of to scare the colonel were in honest truth teaching me something that nobody else knows."

"That is very strange," replied Phebe gravely. "Did you ever tell Master Edward that you had got such a fancy as that, Juno?"

"Master Edward?"—Juno shook her head.—"Master Edward is too good for this wicked world, Phebe, and very, very fit for a better. But he is not the man for explaining the meaning of fancies and wild thoughts; for, you need not tell his pretty sister, you know—but I expect, Phebe, that he has over many wild thoughts and fancies himself."

"Oh, Juno! it is a sin to say so!" exclaimed Phebe indignantly. "If saints did come on earth in these days, for certain sure he would be known for one of them. Why do you speak so, Juno?"

"For no ill will, or misdoubting the goodness of him; but his eye is sometimes over bright, Phebe,—and then he is a trifle jealous, I guess, when he fancies that other folks know something he does not. But he is a good and a holy man, my child," added Juno in a conciliatory tone, for Phebe looked vexed and almost angry; "and don't think that I love you the less, girl, for being ready to quarrel with a new friend out of tender love and duty to an old one.—And now as to Cæsar, and what I know of him. I know this much—and I'll just tell you as it comes, Phebe, to show you how it is that my old brain works. I know he loves black Phebe, for I looked in his eyes and all round about his mouth when he said it. I know that he listened to me as to a friend that could advise him in his need, for he never moved nor spoke; but when I had finished my short say, he bowed his head in a way that told me he would obey me. So Cæsar has run away, and is now somewhere in the forest round Natchez, hiding by day, and crawling out by night, to find out, if he can, Paradise Plantation and his Phebe."

"Do you really believe that he is so near us?" cried Phebe, clasping her hands in ecstasy. "Oh, Juno! dear Juno! how can we manage to meet him?"

"You have got some faith, then, in the old woman?" said the sybil, laughing. "If you were white, now, and a slave-holder, my girl, I would say to you—

Let me to the forest go,
And listen to the winds that blow:
What seems an idle breeze to thee
Would utter precious truth to me!

Ha! ha! ha!—Oh, Phebe, it is such glory to see how a crippled old negro slave like me can make folk's hair stand on end by stuff like that!—But as you, deary, are a black girl, and neither wicked nor a fool, I will tell you just plainly what I will do, and why. Wherever Cæsar is, he must be hid by day—that we know over-well, Phebe: but wherever he is, be sure he will creep out by night,—and be sure, too, it will be round and round just without our cleared grounds he'll be hovering; for I told him the first time I spoke with him whereabouts we lay. Now he dare not come in, and you dare not go out: but I, thanks to my wrinkles and my rhymes, may go, and come too, as I will. So you shall go home to your mother, and set her poor heart at rest, my good child; and I will prow! night by night in the forest, with store of corn-cakes in my pouch,—for I guess, poor fellow, he must want food sadly; and I'll wager my brain against the colonel's we shall have him here in three days."

Phebe looked very much as if, good Christian as she was, she could have fallen on her knees to do homage before the witch-like figure of

Juno; but, checking the impulse, she contented herself by throwing her arms round the old woman, and giving her a most cordial hug.

"And may I go now, Juno?—broad daylight 'tis almost,—may I got now, do you think, straight away and cross the grounds, and in front of two overseers' lodges, and away home to mother's, without being stopped and questioned?"

"And well, deary, if you are stopped and questioned, where's the harm? They'll say maybe, whether black or white, 'Where do you come from?' and you shall tell no lie, my child,—you shall just say, 'Those that locked me up have let me out'—and that's all. Now go, deary."

"But if you find him, Juno?"

"Why then I'll find you too, Phebe. I may send a green bird after you; 'they are Juno's spirits,' you know,—ha! ha! ha! Don't be afraid, my girl: when Cæsar and I are together, you two shall not be long asunder."

With this assurance Phebe left her, with a heart as light as any girl's could be who was hoping for a speedy meeting with her lover, and yet fearing that it might cost him dear, or that it might never, never be at all.

Juno's predictions respecting what was likely to befall her on her way were as literally verified as if they had indeed been uttered under the immediate inspiration of prophecy. About a quarter of a mile from the sequestered nook in which the sibyl's hut was sheltered, and just as she entered the first open field, she was met by Johnson, the fellow who attended Whittlaw at his last fearful visit. Her blood ran cold at the sight of him.

"Soh! Miss Lily!" he exclaimed, "here you are abroad again! Pray may I be so bold as to ask where you come from?"

"Those that locked me up, have let me out," responded Phebe.

He now laughed, snapped his fingers at her, and passed on, saying with a sneer, "You were in a terrible taking, you black smut! much you had to fear, to be sure!"

Phebe pressed her clasped hands upon her heart and thanked God.

The same question and the same answer were repeated three times during her walk; but she reached her mother's hut in perfect safety, and the meeting that followed seemed to atone for all she had suffered. Peggy and the two little girls clung to her with such rapturous fondness, that sorrow, slavery, insults, and stripes were all forgotten, and in the happiness of being reunited they forgot that they wanted any other.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HAVING dismissed the guest whose concealment had cost her much anxiety for several days past, Juno laid herself upon her bed of straw, determined, after her first nap should be over, to betake herself to the forest and wander about, with the noiseless step that was so peculiar to her, in the hope of coming across the path of Cæsar. She did this for two nights in vain, but the third was more propitious; for scarcely had she got clear of the grounds, before she descried the object of her search, though she had nothing but the starlight to help her, and he too was playing bo-peep, from behind a mass of tangled bushes, with a movement as noiseless as her own. It really seemed to be an instinct that led the old woman to stop short before this identical bush, and which also made Cæsar protrude his black knob and stare at her, instead of keeping close behind the covert.

Few words sufficed to bring them to a clear understanding. Juno glided like a black ghost in and out through the thick underwood, and Cæsar followed with as little noise and bustle as a shadow makes in leaping a five-barred gate after its owner. When she had arrived within her citadel, and all access to it was duly bolted and barred, Juno asked her new guest if he were not dying of hunger, which supposition still haunted her; though the alertness of Cæsar's motions had given such good demonstration that his powers of walking were not diminished, that she had not thought it necessary to stop and offer him the provender she carried till they were beneath the shelter of her roof.

As a reply to this kind and hospitable question, Cæsar produced from various parts of his dress about three pounds of very solid beef-steak, a jar full of cold hominy, half of a very respectable loaf, and a most comfortable little flask of whisky.

"Oh, Cæsar! Cæsar!" cried the old woman in a voice of deep concern, "has hunger brought you to this! What will our Phebe say? She'd have died of starvation outright, Cæsar, before she'd have demeaned herself to do such a deed."

"Why, mother!" replied Cæsar, laughing heartily, and showing his magnificent teeth from ear to ear, "what do you think I have done? —walked into a public, and helped myself without paying for it, I expect? But I mustn't be angry with you, 'cause you're Phebe's best friend. However, I haven't been thieving, mother; and what's more, I'm hardly the least bit hungry; so if you are, eat away, and welcome."

A few minutes' conversation explained the mystery to Juno, and she was fain to confess that it was one quite beyond her guessing.

"And is this the first time you have crept out, my poor lad? How weary you must be!"

"The first time, mother! I expect not. Oh dear! oh dear! what would have become of me if I had never once stretched my poor legs since first I look to skulking! No, no, mother, 't has not been as bad as that with me neither; for I have walked about this here forest the best part of every night, and always contrived to be safe again in my loft before the good beyond-sea gentleman came to look for me."

"But, Cæsar, what for do you walk about the woods with such a sight of provision? Why, you might walk all night and do nothing but eat, and yet have enough for breakfast in the morning."

Cæsar's gay spirit laughed aloud at the notion of his having provided such an occupation for himself during his nocturnal rambles; but the minute after, he sighed, and answered very sentimentally,

"No, mother! it was not to be after eating beefsteaks every step I go that I left the gentleman's lumber-loft: it was to be looking for my poor Phebe—my beautiful Phebe! Isn't she a beauty, mother? and didn't I ought to love her? No, no, I never stirred out one of the nights without carrying with me the next day's food, that the good master always brought to me soon after it was dark—because—but I am afraid I am a fool—because I thought, mother, that if by hap I found Phebe, we might run off to the woods together, and that I might hide her, and leave her with a good supper, breakfast, and dinner, you see, and then get back to my loft, and come to her again next night."

Juno looked at him very sternly as he explained this scheme to her, and then said,

"You talk of loving Phebe, you, Master Cæsar! I'll tell you what, my lad—you're no more worthy of being Phebe's lover than I am to be queen of the world. She run away into the woods, and lie munching beefsteaks in a hole till you come back again to bring her more!—Fie, fie, fie, Master Cæsar! If I'd fancied you'd been that sort of chap, you might have walked eastward beyond sunrise for me—I never would have stopped you."

"Oh, mother! mother!" cried the poor fellow, wringing his hands, "don't be so cruel hard upon me! I never did, nor I never will do, anything unworthy of Phebe. Don't I know her education?—and don't I look upon her to be something higher and better than a poor black mortal like me?—Only I am so in love, mother, you see, that I couldn't for the life of me keep nonsense out of my head."

"Well, well," said Juno, considerably softened by this apology, "I must not quarrel with true love, I suppose, let it speak ever so

wild; and to say truth, it don't very much matter, Master Cæsar, how wild you speak, for Phebe will just do what's right and nothing else, that you may 'pend upon."

"And where is she all this time?" cried Cæsar, bursting out into a sort of renewed ecstasy,—“Where is she?—when may I look upon her?"

Juno opened the door of her hut and looked up at the bright stars.

"It is past midnight," said she, "but there's time for me to go and come, I expect, before dangers awake. Our head devil's away to Orleans, Cæsar, and that makes us bold. So if you will sit quiet in that corner, and eat your own supper like an honest man, without stowing away any of it in hopes to entice Phebe into the woods, I'll go and bring her to you."

"Go, mother, go!" cried the delighted negro. "Oh! that ever I should live to see this hour!"

"You won't live, Master Cæsar, to see many more if you make such outcries as that," said the old woman, preparing to depart. But stepping back, she added, "Now look you, my lad, this hut is off the grounds a good half mile, and it belongs to me and nobody else, so 'tis but rarely in the broadest sunshine of mid-day that any eyes but my own look within it: for many count that I am a witch, Cæsar; but you are a Christian, and it is not a witch can scare you. Little danger, therefore, is there that human eyes, and those simple ones, should come to peep into it by night,—and so I expect you're safe enough. But 'tis better sometimes to make sure, surer; so look you here, Cæsar."

Juno approached her bed, and pushing it aside, lifted the trap-door, and with a look and attitude sufficiently witchlike to have made some hearts stout enough on ordinary occasions tremble not a little, she pointed to the excavated chamber beneath. This hole, for it was little better, was curiously and very ingeniously ventilated by a sort of chimney that rose behind the hut to the level of the ground outside, but sufficiently surrounded by briars and brambles to escape ten thousand times more observation than was ever likely to fall upon it. This chimney permitted a light placed on a low stool near it to burn clearly, and by its aid the whole of the excavation was made visible.

"Here's my witchcraft, Cæsar," said Juno, in a chuckling tone, in which triumph and fun were blended. "I have saved the lives of six runaways here already since I have been on the estate, and I may chance to save some more yet, spite of the confidential clerk. If you hear a noise, my lad, that does not begin like this,"—and Juno whistled through the hole in her bamboo,—“then dip down here and

pull the cord after you, and then you'll be as safe as the colonel himself—and perhaps a bit safer."

Cæsar looked at her and her masterly arrangement with astonishment, then grinned applause, nodded his head, and instantly dipped into the abyss before her eyes, proving that he both understood and could practise her instructions.

Old Juno made her way to the hut of Peggy in about half the time that would have been allowed her by the most accomplished sporting eye in the world. In truth, this singular power of getting over the ground by a sort of complex movement which it would be impossible to describe, was by no means the least important support of her supernatural pretensions.

A negro hut ever opens with a latch—for all intruders who could annoy the helpless inmates would find a way to achieve an entrance were the door fastened with bars as heavy as those on the gates of Ham. Juno found no difficulty therefore in approaching the bed where Phebe and her mother slept.

"Phebe!" said the old woman softly.

"You have found him, Juno!" exclaimed the poor girl, springing out of bed. "Mother! mother! wake!—I am going to see Cæsar!"

Peggy, who had worked hard and slept heavily, not having that restless fluttering at the heart which had kept Phebe waking during nearly the whole of the two last nights, had some difficulty in fully understanding what was going forward; but when at length it was made clear to her that Cæsar was actually concealed on or near Paradise Plantation, her anxiety clearly proved that she already considered him as a very dear and precious son.

"Oh Lor! oh Lor!" exclaimed the poor soul in a real agony. "Juno! isn't this fool-hardy boldness? Think of that dear cretur Cæsar in the hands of the 'dential clerk!"

"He'd better be in the hands of the devil, Peggy, that's a fact—for maybe salvation might fetch him back there,—but for certain sure, mercy would never reach him in the clutches of that other and woset demon.—However, don't be after scaring the girl with such fancies, when I want to have her steady and reasonable beyond common. Cæsar is as safe, I tell you, as the President;—so come, Phebe dear; never mind looking smart, girl,—though that's all in nature; but we have no more than time enough;—come along."

"And mayn't I see dear Cæsar too, Juno?" said the affectionate Peggy, very piteously.

"And Becky too—and Sally, I suppose!" replied old Juno crossly.

"No, you can't, Peggy; one ought to be three witches in one to carry off such jobs as you would put one on: lie still and say nothing to nobody.—Come along, Phebe."

In stealthy silence, and keeping cautiously distant from every building, the old woman and her agitated young companion gained at length the place of meeting. Juno stopped before the hut and whistled. In an instant the door flew open, and the weeping Phebe was clasped in the arms of her lover.

"In, in, foolish children!" cried their protecting genius. "It's well that the bull-frogs and the cattiedids can tell no tales."

If true affection could suffice to make two creatures happy though surrounded by danger and threatened with tortures and death, Cæsar and Phebe must have enjoyed the boon, for their attachment to each other was very strong, and for a few moments perhaps they tasted an unmixed joy. But there is something in the condition of a slave that, beyond every other marked by human misery, defies the power of hope to gild its future; and herein perhaps lies, though it sounds like a paradox, the secret of those light smiles and all that careless merriment of which we are told by those who would defend the abomination. It is only when it is possible that some change may alter our condition that we feel either anxious or hopeful about it. King David fasted and wept while his spirit was suspended between hope and fear; but when all was over—when all hope had fled, he arrayed himself and feasted. A negro slave has no hope for the future; he, therefore, gives himself to the careless merriment of the present whenever it greets him; forgetful perhaps, for the moment, of the labour and the lash that awaits him with the morrow's sun, but as far removed in his laughter from any feeling that deserves the name of human happiness as the morris-dancer who cuts a caper on a mountebank's stage.

After the first few moments, during which nothing was remembered by either but that they were once more together, the sense of Cæsar's danger came back to the mind of Phebe, and she burst into tears.

"Oh, Phebe! Phebe!" exclaimed the unhappy young man, "don't turn so very soon from joy to sorrow! Think what a dear blessing it is to look in one another's face—and don't cry, Phebe, till we are forced to part.—And how do they treat my pretty Phebe?—tell me all—tell me all, Phebe," he repeated, while his voice trembled as he asked the question. "They don't give her the lash, Juno?—Surely no master could order the lash to Phebe?"

"No, my dear Cæsar—I have escaped well as yet; don't think of me—think only of yourself. Oh, Juno! dear, dear, Juno! what is to become of him?" said Phebe, vainly endeavouring to check her tears.

"And that's what I must work my old brain to find out. 'Tis no easy job, that's a fact, children; but maybe I'll contrive something for him for all that; so wipe up your tears, deary, and forget all about it for to-night."

Another trembling half-hour was spent in asking and answering

questions concerning their respective situations since they were torn asunder; and then the old woman interfered, with the unwelcome tidings that they must part. The poor souls acknowledged it, declared that she was quite right, and that they would go directly; but still another and another word succeeded, till Juno lost all patience, and finally protested that they should never meet again in her hut if they lingered another moment.

This threat produced the desired effect;—poor Phebe impressed a hasty kiss on Cæsar's forehead, and was out of sight in a moment.

"And you have got to steal to your roost at Reichland?" said the old woman, addressing the disconsolate lover; "and that before any of the German people are about? You might as safely march into Congress, and say you won't be a slave. Just look eastward, Master Cæsar, that's all; just listen to the twittering of the birds,—they are not such fools as you—they know their time if you don't, and they tell you as loud as they can speak that it's morning, morning, morning, and that it will be broad daylight in less than an hour; and so, to pay you for your kissing and your jabbering, you must just slip down again into my strong box. There! take your provender with ye—and bide still till I call you."

Infinitely too unhappy to discuss the possibility of his getting back to Reichland, and pretty nearly indifferent to what might next befall him, Cæsar uttered not a word, but meekly obeying her commands, let himself down into the recess, which was speedily covered by the trap-door. Another moment sufficed to replace the little bed in its usual position; and so proudly satisfied was Juno with the security of her guest, that she would probably have seen one of their task-masters enter her dwelling with more of triumph and satisfaction than of alarm.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WITH all her wild vagaries, old Juno was perfectly capable of forming a very just estimate of the value of such a friend as the one Cæsar had found at Reichland; and not only prudently determined that his enforced absence should not be left unexplained, but moreover, that if it were in the power of an old woman to do it, the kindness manifested should be wrought upon, to become still further useful.

In pursuance of this decision she set off on the following morning for the house of Mr. Steinmark. Notwithstanding his wandering license, she had never entered his premises before, and her shrewd,

and in some sort enlightened mind, was powerfully struck by the novel aspect of the whole establishment. In spite of all the sufferings and hated degradation which the system of slavery had brought upon herself, and the misery she had witnessed from its effects on others, Juno had never yet imagined what human nature could be without it. As she entered the large farm-yard, the first peculiarity that attracted her attention was the perfect order and neatness that that reigned there. There was something, she hardly knew what, so totally unlike the general air that pervades a scene of labour where slaves are employed, that she seated herself on a block of wood beside the entrance, that she might contemplate it at leisure.

"Where," thought Juno, "do they keep all the children?—Maybe they don't hire breeding servants—and then I expect the little ones don't roll and tumble about with the other stock, like ours."

In truth, there is no feature more remarkable in a regular slave-peopled plantation or farm than the manner in which the children (the multiplication of this branch of produce being one of the most profitable speculations) are seen lying about in the homestead, some half, some wholly naked, all well fattened and fed, but bearing little more resemblance in attitude and action to the being made in God's own image, than the young swine with whom they associate.

"And how do they manage," muttered the old woman, as with her chin resting on her bamboo she continued her examination of the scene,— "how do they manage to have all the fences so unaccountable trim, and even the very dunghill kept in handsome shape, and they without a nigger belonging to them?"

From the still life, her eye was attracted to the widely-opened doors of a large barn opposite to her, in which were two German labourers threshing out wheat. She regarded them steadily for several minutes, and then exclaimed aloud, "If that's the rate at which a hired white man works, no wonder the master of the land is wealthy. It would take six niggers to do the work of those two."

"You're right there, mother," said an old German whom Steinmark had brought with him from the Fatherland, and who at that moment entered at the gate beside her. "I have watched negroes work for an hour together, many a time, since I have been in this country, and I never saw one yet who put out the strength of a man. But perhaps they might do better if they worked on their own account, or got profit or praise in any way as other folks do."

Juno rose from her seat, and looked at the man with an expression that on younger and more comely features would have been very touching, for it seemed to speak the sorrow and degradation of a whole race.

"Happy, happy, happy are you?" she said, in a low and plaintive

voice, which showed that it was not her human temper, but her immortal soul, that was moved by the thoughts suggested. "Do you kneel late and early to thank God for the especial grace to which you are born?—or do you tremble lest his justice should make all even in the world to come?—There lies the master's house, I expect," she added, pointing her bamboo towards a roof and chimneys that rose above a thick cluster of flowering shrubs to the left.

The German nodded assent, but spoke not; for in truth he was puzzled by the singular tenour of her speech, and a spice of native superstition, joined to the very witchlike appearance of the old woman, gave him a sort of tremour as he listened to her which disposed him to avoid farther conversation.

Proceeding in the direction indicated, and opening a neat low wicket that led from the farmyard, Juno soon found herself upon the wide-spread lawn in front of the portico.

The windows of the sitting-room were as usual open, and nothing doubting but that so pleasant a room must be the abode of its master, she walked on and presented her singular figure before the eyes of a young trio, who were laughing and talking with much gaiety while examining a large map that lay on the table.

This happy party consisted of Lotte, Henrich, and the Baron Hochland. No other person was in the room; and they were indulging in the delicious hopes which a letter that had arrived the night before, had opened to them, that they should ere long inhabit the land of their wishes and their birth. This letter was from the Baron Steinmark, and announced the death both of his wife and son by the smallpox; it stated, with deep feeling, the desolation of his bereaved condition, his son having naturally been the object of all his hopes, and concluded by imploring his brother to bring back his family to Westphalia, where his large and desolate castle should receive them, and thereby become once more a home of hope and comfort to himself.

Frederick Steinmark had been deeply touched by the receipt of this letter, but, as it should seem by the words of hope rather than of certainty uttered by the young people as they travelled exultingly over the map of Germany which lay on the table, it had not elicited from him as yet any promise to quit the prosperous domain he had created around him.

So completely were the party occupied, that neither of them either heard or saw the approach of Juno; and it was not till her strange figure was within the window, that Lotte, who fronted it, looked up and saw her.

An exclamation of surprise burst from her; but age and decrepitude were ever sure to propitiate kindness from Lotte, which the

badge of oppression displayed by her dark skin rather tended to increase than diminish.

"You look weary, my good woman,—sit down," was the fair girl's salutation to this battered remnant of humanity; and as she uttered it, she placed an easy chair for her. This gentle welcome completely changed the mood of the old woman. When she first heard their laughter, and marked their fair young joyous faces, a bitter feeling of contrast arose, followed however by the thought that, despite her age, her colour, and her slavery, she too might be counted as something in creation, and something too as much out of the ordinary run of mortals as was the beautiful creature before whom she stood.

This thought was followed with the determination to disturb a little the bright current of their young spirits, by astounding their imaginations with some of her mystical rhyming prophecies, and the assumption of more than mortal power; but Lotte's voice conjured the foul fiend out of her, and taking the offered seat, which was more welcome to her mind than to her body, she said,

"Heaven reward you, fair and good, for your merciful kindness to an old slave! Are you the master's daughter?"

"Yes, I am—if you mean the master of this house,—I am Frederick Steinmark's daughter."

"And may I see him, my pretty lady? I have real business for his ear, and no rambling nonsense of witchcraft, as perhaps you may think by looking at me."

"My father," replied Lotte, "is in the fields; but we must not send you to look for him there, for you might wander far and miss him at last. Cannot you leave a message for him? I will repeat it very faithfully when he returns."

Though the beauty and sweetness of Lotte had quite won old Juno's heart, which was moreover not insensible to the good-humoured aspect of her companions, she felt too deeply the importance of not confiding the secret of a runaway slave to any from whom it could be concealed, to venture any allusion to the real object of her visit. She therefore only said in reply, that she thought the master would choose himself to hear what she had to say, and therefore she would rather seek him if she must walk an hour for it.

"Run, Henrich, then," said Lotte, "and try to learn which way he is gone." The young man obeyed, and in a few minutes returned with both father and mother, whom he had met together returning to the house.

"This is my father, good woman," said Lotte, stepping forward to meet him, and whispering in his ear, that he must speak to the poor old negress himself, for that she would communicate her business to no one else.

This information at once determined the kind-hearted German to break through his usual custom of appointing a deputy, and seating himself beside her, and looking with much interest at her worn and singular figure, he said, in a voice that was indeed the father to that of Lotte. "What can I do for you, good woman?"

"Speak to me where none other but yourself can hear," replied Juno, with a little touch of mysticism in her tone.

"That can hardly be necessary, I think," replied Steinmark, somewhat suspicious from the tone that his visitor would prove an impostor; "there are none here but friends—what is it you want of me?"

"Have you never done a good deed," said the old woman, fixing her deep-set eyes upon him, "that might be a saving and a heavenly act if done in private, and yet might prove bloody and mischievous if witnessed?"

The eyes of the whole party were fixed upon Juno as she spoke, and there was not one of them that did not share the suspicion which had at first occurred to Steinmark, that she intended to pass for a fortune-teller or negro sorceress; a profession not unfrequently adopted by those among the race who attain to an advanced age. It was therefore with considerable surprise that his family, who knew his uncompromising aversion to deception of every kind, saw Frederick Steinmark rise at the moment her look and manner betokened most mystery, and with a heightened colour and hurried step proceed towards the door, desiring the old woman to follow him.

Having reached a place of safety, Steinmark, who, as may easily be divined, had guessed her errand, made her again sit down, and then once more requested to know her business.

"The God of mercy will bless you for this, and for the rest," said Juno; "and now I will tell you all. Cæsar was not ungrateful, master—negroes are never ungrateful; but Cæsar loved one of his own poor race as dearly as a prince and a white man could love—and he knew Phebe was not far off from here—and he wandered about by night till he found her, and that was yesterday; and the minutes flew over fast, and light was in the east before the poor young things had told each other one half their misery since parting. And so I sent her home, and I hid him closer and safer than you could do, master, with all your noble kindness.—But Cæsar is not ungrateful."

Steinmark was probably not sorry to hear that his dangerous guest had found another asylum; but really anxious about the future destiny of the poor fellow, he inquired what he intended to do after the first heat of pursuit should be over.

"It is there, master, that we must look again to you," replied Juno firmly, while she fixed her skilful and scrutinising eyes on the benevolent countenance before her. "If you will help, he may be saved;

—if not, torture or death, or perhaps both, must be all that he can hope for.”

“I would do all I could,” replied the noble German, “to help any fellow-creature in such a strait; and your poor friend Cæsar is a very fine fellow, and I would gladly serve him even in a less necessity: but what can I do, my good woman? The laws of the state are explicit, severe, and most rigorously executed against all who aid and assist in the evasion or concealment of a slave. • My being a foreigner by no means exempts me from the penalties these laws exact for such an offence.—What then do you suppose I could do for him?”

“I will tell you, sir,” said Juno, “what you can do, and I will pray the God of mercy to give you grace to do it. You may purchase Cæsar.”

“Purchase him, my good friend?—You surely forget his situation. How can I deal for a slave of whose existence I am bound, for his own sake, to appear ignorant?”

“No, master, no,” replied Juno eagerly; “you are only bound to appear ignorant of that which you neither know, nor ever shall know. You are ignorant of the place of his concealment—say it, and swear it, master, with a safe conscience, for so you are, and so you ever shall be;—swear this to Benjamin Franklin Oglevie, owner of the paper-factory on the banks of the river five miles above New Orleans, and then offer him such a price for Cæsar as shall tempt his avarice to the sacrifice of his revenge. Do this, and your wealth shall be blessed to the hundredth generation of those who shall inherit it.”

There was something in the language of the old negress that surprised Steinmark, and convinced him that it was no common person he had to deal with. Nevertheless, there was an apparent want of coherence in her scheme which led him strongly to suspect, that whatever her mind might once have been, it was now unsettled. It was evident, however, that she was perfectly capable of comprehending what was said to her; and in the humane hope of turning her mind from a project that might harass her very painfully, and perhaps excite fallacious hopes in those for whom she seemed so deeply interested, he attempted to point out the impossibility of its success.

“But do you not perceive,” said he, “that I shall acknowledge the being acquainted with his retreat by making this proposal? How can I offer to purchase a slave if I do not know where to find him?”

“Leave that to me, master. All I ask of you is to go, or send, or write to Benjamin Franklin Oglevie, paper-factory, Ciceroville, near New Orleans; and write or say this: • Sir,—you had a slave called Cæsar; he ran away from you about ten days ago. I will give you one thousand dollars for him, provided I can find him; as I understand he worked as a gardener in Kentucky, and I find difficulty in getting

such a one as I require. At this moment I know not where he is; but I am assured that if I make the purchase, he will have means of knowing it, and that after I have paid the money and received your receipt for it, together with all other documents necessary to prove that he is mine, I shall find him on the following morning at work in my garden. In case you should wish to know at whose recommendation it is I wish to make this expensive purchase, I beg to inform you that it is Colonel Dart, a gentleman of high standing, whose name is well known in New Orleans, to whom I owe the advantage of being likely to get a gardener to suit me.—Will you write or say this, master?"

The incoherence of the plan had certainly disappeared; but there was another feature in it quite as fatal to the mind of Steinmark, and he answered, "If I should consent to give a thousand dollars for the purchase of Cæsar, I certainly would not accompany the offer with a falsehood.—Who is Colonel Dart? I know nothing of him."

"But I do," replied Juno with a smile that seemed involuntary; for, resuming the earnestness of her manner, she said eagerly, "Should you receive such a recommendation from Colonel Dart, will you do it?"

Frederick Steinmark was not naturally a very cautious man, but there was something in the appearance and manners of his visitor which inspired more surprise than confidence; yet he was far from intending to abandon the hope she had suggested, that he might save poor Cæsar. After meditating for a minute or two, instead of answering her question, he said, "Do you know anything of a person named Bligh?"

"Do I know him?—do I know the apostle of our race?—do I know Edward Bligh?—Yes, master! I know him, and I love and reverence him as the good only can be loved and revered. Will you do this thing at his bidding?"

"I will," said Steinmark without farther hesitation. "If he requests it, and no falsehood mixes with the negotiation, I will give a thousand dollars to become the lawful master of Cæsar."

The joy and gratitude of poor old Juno were expressed in words and looks of such genuine and simple sincerity, that the feelings of Steinmark were now strongly awakened in her favour, and he reproached himself for the unworthy suspicions he had entertained of her motives and character.

"What is your name, my good woman?" said he kindly.

"Old Juno, master," she replied, rising from her chair and making the lowest curtsy her stiff knees would permit; and old Juno will bless you with her latest breath."

"Well, Juno, I think we understand each other now; so let me

take you back again to the sitting-room. By the way, I see no occasion to preserve secrecy with my family any longer. When the safety of Cæsar was concerned, I submitted to it; but as you tell me he is safe from all pursuit, there is nothing to be feared for him: and to tell you the truth, Juno, I am not fond of mysteries."

"And I would to heaven, master," she replied, "that the same freedom of spirit, and that power which the white man has of doing his will openly, belonged to me, as it does to you! then old Juno would leave off her tricks, and never again try to seem other than the poor old cripple she is. But it would not do, master; Juno would lose all her power of doing good."

"Well, well! I suppose you know best, Juno. But I may tell them all, may I not, why you are here?"

"Only let me go first. Do not let me hear you talk together of old Juno and her tricks."

"But you will stay to rest, and to take some refreshment?"

Juno shook her head. "You have given rest and refreshment to my spirit, master, and that was what I wanted. Farewell, and God reward you!" As she spoke, she passed through a door that opened upon a field behind the house, and traversed it so rapidly, that Steinmark's answering "Farewell" was scarcely uttered in time to overtake her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MEANWHILE, our hero arrived at New Orleans. There is always something splendid and attractive in the sight of a great city rising on the banks of a majestic river. The effect, indeed, is often delusive, giving an idea of general cheerfulness and prosperity which either belongs not to the scene at all, or only to a very limited portion of its population. In no instance, perhaps, is this more the case than at New Orleans. The noble Levee, forming a barrier to one of earth's most powerful streams—the long, long line of shipping, bearing the colours of all the nations of the world—the busy market, the well-dressed crowd, the gay verandas—all speak of industry and wealth. But penetrate a very little beyond the surface, and where is the barren rock or desert moor that shows not a spectacle more cheering? Year after year, religion and philosophy have struck off the fetters from the emancipated slave in different quarters of the globe; but at New Orleans every white man's object is to rivet them on his black brethren firmer and firmer still. This is the business of their lives:—and

what are their pleasures? To revel in the caresses of the race they scorn, and to rouse their dreamy, idle souls to animation by the sordid stimulants of strong drink and gambling: and then, as if their own unholy deeds brought not sufficient punishment, nature sends forth the monster Fever, to stalk through the land, breathing avenging curses with his poisonous breath.

Such is New Orleans. Yet to New Orleans Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw approached with a heart swelling with anticipated pleasure, and a brain throbbing with projects for the gratification both of avarice and ambition.

The aspiring nature of young Whitlaw might with truth be called an appetite that grew with what it fed on; for the firmer he felt himself in the good graces of Colonel Dart, and the higher his estimate became of the amount of his father's wealth, the more ardent was his wish to rise still higher on the wheel of Fortune.

As the young man stood on the stern gallery of the stately boat that bore him onward into the very centre of this extensive mart, from which station he was enabled to contemplate one by one every object after he had passed it—for not for worlds would Whitlaw have stood among the motley population at the bow, even to gratify his longing wish to see all and everything,—it might be fairly doubted whether his confident hopes of gain at the gambling-houses, or the glowing anticipations of unbounded license of debauchery for his leisure hours, inspired the strongest feeling of triumphant happiness at his heart.

Scarcely had the churning paddles ceased to play, when he sprang on shore, and securing a drag and a negro, he proceeded directly to Mrs. Bennet's celebrated boarding-house, renowned for the best dinners, and the most confiding indifference as to exits and entrances, of any house in the town.

He was fortunate enough to find a room vacant at this favourite rendezvous of freedom and fashion; and having, by dint of persuading Mrs. Bennet that he should certainly stay three times as long as he intended to do, prevailed upon her to remit a dollar a week in her usual charge, he established himself at once, adorned himself with the most chosen embellishments of Natchez, and sallied forth in search of adventure.

Whitlaw was an excellent billiard-player; and even amidst the rural, or at least suburban retreats of Natchez—under-Hill, had already learned how very easy it was, with a skillful hand and a crafty brain, to make pleasure and profit unite in rewarding the hours and years of practice he had devoted to this game.

He first directed his steps to a well-known table close to the French theatre; and, as was usual with him on such occasions, assumed a look of simple curiosity, as if the scene were very new and very

strange to him. The table was occupied by two men who appeared very unequally matched; the one being a dashing, neck-or-nothing, and seeming lucky player; and the other, a quiet, deliberate, but very clumsy performer.

Considerable amusement was produced among the bystanders, who were numerous, by the contrast both between the play and the demeanour of the opponents.

"Now for it, my fine fellow!" cried the successful player, who was evidently of the half-horse, half-alligator breed of fair Kentucky; "now, then, I'll go the whole hog with ye—I'll make eight of this stroke,—and that's a shame, for it's two more than I want."

He made the stroke, and marked four for it.

"Then I've got another squeak for it, before I'm right-down stumped," cried the losing player, in a small voice, in which a little hope seemed to struggle against a great deal of despair. "Please, gentlemen, don't touch my elbow; I expect that's not the way to give me fair play, and who knows but I may do something better at last?"

Shouts of laughter burst from the lookers-on, as the man, after studying the table as if his life depended on the hazard he was playing for, at last gave a most energetic thrust and missed.

"Capital! capital!" shouted the Kentuckian; "take another go—do now—and then you see I shall win clean without losing an inch."

His adversary, looking sullen, sulky, and mortified, replied: "Play, can't you? and not stand there gibing and jeering a better man than yourself—play, and have done with it."

The Kentuckian made a careless stroke, and the game was finished.

The loser immediately pulled out a huge leather bag extremely well filled; and as he laid down the five dollars he had lost, observed in a tone of recovered cheerfulness, that he wasn't daunted for all that was come and gone yet—that if he lost, he could afford to pay, and nobody's leave to ask neither."

Half a dozen voices simultaneously offered to play him, and more than one proposed to give him odds; but he turned from them all, saying, "No, no, you'll be all too hard for me; I'd like to try luck with this young gentleman," he added, civilly turning towards Whitlaw, "for he looks more like one of my own sort. Jerico bob! young gentleman, let you and I have a right-down good try together—I'll bet fifty dollars with any one that pleases, if 'twas only to prove that I ain't afraid to lose."

"I expect, sir," replied Whitlaw with the air of a person rather affronted, "that you mightn't find it so over-easy to beat me neither. 'Tis a fact that I never was in New Orleans before; but I calculate a man may play billiards in country as well as town—there's more tables

than one in the Union. I don't want to play you, sir, nohow; if I beat, I like to beat for honour as well as for profit; and so I'll play this gentleman here," turning to the Kentuckian, "for a hundred dollars if he likes it."

It appeared that the table was already bespoken; but after a few minutes' conversation among the parties, it was agreed to give it up to the young stranger and the Kentuckian, if the latter consented to the match; and bets were already running high against the boastful youngster.

"I expect I musn't show a white feather, though the bet's rather a high one for a poor country dealer like me," replied the man; "but when did Kentuck turn tail? So have at ye, my young un," he added, placing himself at the table and brandishing his cue: "faint heart never won either lady or living."

"That's hard enough upon me though," observed the man who had just lost the game; "I've a right to my revenge anyhow."

"Well, then, take it," cried Whittlaw, with the gay boastful laugh of a boy; "father didn't send me to New Orleans for the first time without lining my purse, I can tell you that; and so you may bet against me, and upon the man that gave it to you so handsome—and that's a generous offer, I expect."

"Well, then," said the loser, "I'll do it—done, for a hundred upon Kentuck—done!"

"Done!" replied Whittlaw. "Now, then, for the honour of the backwoods! What will father say if I lose?"

"I'll take you another fifty, sir, if you like it," said a yellow-fever-tinted senior who was quietly looking on.

"My —!" exclaimed Whittlaw; "if luck runs against me, I'm done, I tell you that. But 'tis just as well to be hanged for a sheep as a lamb; so I say done to you, sir, for fifty. And look now, I'll tell you what I'll do besides."

He set down the cue he had taken, and drawing a heavy bag from his pocket, counted one hundred dollars from it; then with equal simplicity he produced a pocket-book from his breast-pocket, and displayed notes to the amount of five hundred more: "There now!" said he, "that's my stock for the time present; not but what father could double and treble that, and more too, and never miss it. But that's my capital for the time being, and I'm willing to risk every cent of it, except one hundred to pay boarding and carry me up home. So if anybody has a fancy for a bet, let him speak: but I'll tell him beforehand, that I'm not that bad at the game to be made the fool of, that we've some of us seen done stumped in our day."

Whittlaw accompanied these last words by throwing a sly look over his shoulder at the loser of the last game.

At least half a dozen voices again proclaimed their readiness to pronounce the important "done!" to whatever amount the young and hardy stranger chose to name. Upon which Whitlaw very deliberately, but uttering now and then a laughing word of self-reproach against his own daring, apportioned his bets to the amount of his cash, amongst those who had challenged him; and then, examining his cue more carefully, and changing it more than once, he declared himself at length ready to begin.

The Kentuckian was by no means a bad, though a very dashing player, and began the game by making two or three extremely fine strokes. Betting became brisk among the bystanders, very long odds being offered against Whitlaw. His style of play was totally unlike that of his antagonist: though he had talked of luck, it was very evident to the only person present (except the marker) who really understood the game, that it was not to his luck he trusted. When the balls were so placed as to afford the possibility of a stroke that told high, he made it, but repeatedly missed one or two pretty hazards that he seemed anxiously to play for.

When the game was about half through, and Whitlaw right behind his adversary, the quiet, awkward player who had just been so unmercifully beat by the Kentuckian took an opportunity of whispering to our hero, while the attention of the whole room was fixed on a stroke that his opponent was studying with more caution than seemed usual with him,

"I say, young man, let me off my bet, and I'll contrive that the rest shall all double."

"Good!" replied Whitlaw, in the same tone, and with a look that seemed to say "now we understand each other!"

The Kentuckian missed the stroke. Whitlaw pretended the most extravagant joy, and exclaimed "Eight! what's eight?—I wish, by Jingo, that I'd a thousand dollars more about me! I'd be d—d if I wouldn't stake 'em every cent after that miss."

"Well, sir," said the clumsy player, "'tis a pity you should be thwarted, and this your first try at New Orleans. If you'll be pleased to name your name, and give us notes of hand, I don't question but the company would be content."

"To be sure,"—"To be sure,"—said many voices; and Whitlaw, with the air of a man heated and reckless, immediately increased his bets to fifteen hundred dollars.

The result may be easily guessed—he won the game by two.

Notwithstanding the general disappointment and the angry feeling that accompanied it, there was not a single victim who did not believe it to be the effect of sheer ill luck.

"At any rate, sir," said one of the greatest losers, "I hope you

don't intend to be so mean as to start away home with your winnings? If you're a gentleman, you'll be willing to bet again."

"Well, sir, I *am* a gentleman," replied Whittlaw, "and willing to do what's fair and honourable; and I'd scorn to be afraid of risking again this, and more too, till you've fairly got your revenge, which is sure to come, I know, sooner or later; only I expect you won't insist upon my playing now, seeing it's dinner-time, and I'm going to dine at Mrs. Bennet's for the first time; and they do say her dinners are dreadful good.—So, good morning, gentlemen—shall be happy to meet again—to-morrow, maybe?"

"That's fair enough; good morning, sir,—we shall be looking out for you."

Whittlaw departed; but as he reached the head of the stairs the clumsy player was at his elbow.

"Call in to-night, can't you? he said in a whisper: "if you've a mind for a partnership, we may make a good thing of it."

"I'll come if I can," said Whittlaw; but I've business of all sorts—good morning."

CHAPTER XXIX.

It will be easily believed that Mr. Jonathan Jefferson Whittlaw sat down to Mrs. Bennet's *table d'hôte* in a very agreeable state of mind. He had, in truth, opened his campaign well. Fifteen hundred dollars made by a single game at billiards, and that quite a casual one, may appear to sober-minded Europeans as an exaggeration of probabilities too violent to be safely inserted in a narrative professing to paint existing manners; but any sceptic may be easily cured of his doubts by making a very few inquiries either at the scene of action or of those who are well acquainted with it. As to Whittlaw, he thought the transaction so far from being anything at all uncommon—(and yet his early experience had been confined wholly to those miniature imitations of New Orleans to be found at Natchez)—that he resolved, as the thing seemed likely to answer so well, to sacrifice some of the lighter pleasures he had promised himself, for the sake of pursuing it systematically.

He had fully intended to have passed this his first evening amidst the unceremonious gaiety of a Quadroon ball; but as he eat his pepper-soup, and then refreshed his pallet with free libations of Mrs. Bennett's admirable Madeira he reasoned upon the heavy loss that might ensue from such a sacrifice of time to idle pleasure.

Nevertheless, the temptation was great. He had heard so much of the splendour of these entertainments, and the exceeding grace and beauty displayed at them, that he still wavered, till at length, his fancy being stimulated perhaps by the inspiring wine, he determined to indulge himself in gazing upon the fair assemblage for an hour, and then to pass the rest of the night, as in duty bound, in useful business.

Before retiring for the purpose of making his toilet, he indulged in smoking a couple of cigars, accompanied by a due proportion of whisky-punch; and then feeling himself a little overcome by his voyage, his billiards, and his dinner, he threw his legs comfortably upon the chimney-piece and fell fast asleep.

How long he rested thus is uncertain; but when he waked, the two very gentlemanlike men who had shared his punch were departed, and the lamps were burning dim, as the oil which fed them was nearly exhausted. He started up, and looking at his watch, saw with extreme astonishment that he had slept two hours. It was now past nine, and he was hastily approaching the bell to ring for a chamber candle, when the sight of his own pocket-book lying open upon the carpet arrested his eyes and his steps.

With a beating heart he stooped to seize it. He remembered with an instantaneous gleam of satisfaction that his person had been thrown during his nap into an attitude as nearly *topsy-turvy* as possible, and he felt that it was likely enough that the pocket-book might have fallen out; but the moment his hand touched it, all soft delusive hope fled for ever—his bank notes were gone!

Rage and despair seized upon his heart, and divided it between them. He rang the bell so furiously, that two negroes and one yellow man entered the large dining-room by three different doors to know his pleasure,

"Where is your mistress?" he thundered out; "where is the woman who keeps this den of thieves? Call her to me—bring her to me this instant, or I'll burn the last atom of wool from your beastly scalps before I sleep!"

The three slaves retired by their three several doors as he spoke.

In as short a time as it was well possible for her to enter from the drawing-room, the gentle, civil Mrs. Bonnet stood before him.

Whitlaw's eyes rolled fearfully in his head, and he actually foamed at the mouth, as he attempted to make her understand the wrong that had been done him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said in the very softest voice imaginable, "but I really cannot understand what it is you say."

"Say!" roared the bereaved young man in accents of genuine agony, "but you shall know and feel it, if you cannot hear. I have been robbed, woman! robbed of two thousand dollars since I entered this room!"

"Very extraordinary indeed," observed Mrs. Bennet, without in the slightest degree deviating from her usual sweet tone. "Pray how did it happen, sir?"

"It is you must tell that, madam; and so you shall if there be law in the state. It is you must tell who those two fellows are with the large red whiskers—both of them, they had both of them red whiskers."

"The two gentlemen with red whiskers, sir? Oh dear! there will not be the least difficulty in the world in telling that, without troubling the State about it in the least. The tallest is General Helingsworth; and the youngest and shortest, Major Tomlinson."

"Let them call themselves what they choose, madam, they have robbed me of two thousand dollars, and they must give account of it either in public or in private."

"Oh dear! sir, the gentlemen are both of them perfectly well known in New Orleans. They are of the very highest standing, and would I am sure, be happy to answer, to anybody of their own station, any question that could be asked either in private or public."

"It will be long enough, I can tell you, before I shall be of their station, which is just neither more nor less than thieves and pickpockets. I went to sleep in this here room with two thousand dollars in notes; and now I am waked up, I find them all gone, and my pocket-book with all my letters left lying on the floor. Them two red-whiskered men were in the room when I dropped asleep, and now they are gone, as well as my notes, and how can I think anything else but that they have robbed me?"

"You must think of course, sir, just whatever you happen to please," replied Mrs. Bennet, without for an instant appearing to lose the beautiful placidity of her temper; "but when gentlemen that are not over-much known in the town accuse those who are, of robbery and felony, and I know not what besides, it is very likely, I think, that the accusation will not be greatly attended to." And so saying, the well-dressed, graceful lady of the house made a curtsy and departed.

The unfortunate Whittlaw remained in a state of the most complete discomfiture. Mrs. Bennet's very cool way of receiving the intelligence of his loss convinced him that there was little or no hope of recovering it. Whether her indifference proceeded from the frequency of such occurrences among the fashionable society of New Orleans, or that the two persons he had accused were really beyond and above all suspicion, he was at a loss to decide. After meditating on the subject in very moody solitude for a long hour, he determined upon inquiring for the nearest magistrate, laying a formal statement of the facts before him, and insisting upon it that the two individuals upon whom his suspicions rested should be summoned to answer to the accusation.

It was now some hours too late for such an application, and he must

therefore wait with what patience he could for the morrow. Meanwhile, the unfortunate young man felt that his state of mind no longer fitted him for the enjoyment of the brilliant scene that the ball-room was likely to exhibit; neither had he at that moment energy to enter upon any sharp encounter of wit with the respectable personage who had invited him to an appointment at the billiard-table in the evening. So, after taking a few hurried turns about the room, he again rang the bell for a candle and a glass of brandy; and thus enlightened and sustained, he retired to his room and his bed, and spent a feverish and most miserable night in thinking of his loss while awake, and in dreaming of it when for a few short moments he was happy enough to fall asleep.

He rose early, and, to avoid meeting the suspected thieves or their complaisant landlady, repaired to a coffee-house for his breakfast.

As soon as it was possible to present himself before a magistrate, he waited upon Squire Grampton, and having very clearly stated the case, desired that the two suspected persons should immediately be summoned before him to undergo an examination.

Squire Grampton heard him very quietly to the end, and then said, placing both his legs on the table before him, and cleaning his nails with a penknife, "Pray, young man, what may your name be?"

"Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw, sir."

"And where do you come from?"

"From Paradise Plantation, near Natchez, sir."

"Is Paradise Plantation your own property?"

"No, sir, it is not as yet; but it may be one day."

"O! and you brought two thousand dollars with you to New Orleans?"

"I don't expect it's necessary for me to certify how much I brought with me to New Orleans. What I am ready to swear to, is, that I went to sleep in Mrs. Bennet's dining-room with two thousand dollars in notes, last night, in my pocket-book—that the only people in the room with me were General Holingsworth and Major Tomlinson,—and that when I waked, my pocket-book was on the floor, and my notes gone."

Squire Grampton was reckoned a remarkably good-natured man, and he now proved his just claim to the reputation by laughing heartily.

"And so, my fine fellow, you calculate upon having General Holingsworth, who is no less a man than surveyor-general of the Alabama territory, and Major Tomlinson, one of the largest slave-holders in the State,—you really calculate upon having them called over the coals, because you went to sleep and lost your money?—ha! ha! ha! ha!—that's fun, at any rate. Now, my raw one, shall I give you a bit of advice that may chance to be useful? Hold your money fast when

you've got it; and when you lose it, never accuse a rich man of being the thief—at least not in New Orleans—for it won't answer. And so, young man, I wish you a very good morning."

The good-natured man's look was so decided and peremptory, that the unhappy Whittlaw saw there was nothing left save to submit. But he went forth from the magistrate's house swearing vengeance, not so much against him, or even the thieves who had stolen his treasure, as against the whole human race, and binding himself in body and soul to prey upon the unwary whenever he should meet them, till his loss and all the suffering it had cost him should be atoned for a thousand-fold.

In order the better to arrange the plan of operations by which this resolution should be put in practice, Whittlaw on quitting the house of Squire Grampton strode away towards the Levee; and for two hours solaced himself with a walk beside the father of waters, during which he reasoned with all his natural acuteness, and acquired wisdom, upon the nature of his actual position, and the uses to which it might be applied.

He remembered with some satisfaction, though assuredly it was accompanied by a sharp pang, that he still had one hundred silver dollars in his bag. This was the sum he had coaxed out of his father, and it now constituted his entire capital.

How best could he multiply this a hundredfold? The proposed partnership offered by the *clumsy player* again occurred to him. At first he had not felt greatly disposed to listen to it, because it appeared to him evident that he was himself the sharper rogue of the two. It was certain, indeed, that his quick eye had detected the latent skill of his proposed associate even in the manner by which he lost his game; while he, on the contrary, had been completely deluded by Whittlaw's well-acted assumption of rustic simplicity. Nevertheless, his after-by-play when he proposed that Whittlaw's notes of hand should be taken was by no means contemptible; not to mention that the very act in which he had detected him, of throwing dust in the eyes of the honest Kentuckian, said much in favour of his being admitted to the friendship he solicited.

But the argument which decided the question was the reduced state of Whittlaw's finances. "How, in God's name," he muttered with closed teeth as he proceeded at an accelerated pace on his return to the town,—“how am I to do business on a large scale with this pitiful cash in my pocket for a capital?—No.—I must begin with this fellow anyhow, whatever I may do with him after.”

Nothing that had hitherto passed between them had given any hint to Whittlaw whether this personage, whom he now greatly desired to

See, made part of the establishment he had visited yesterday, or was, like himself, only a visiter there. In either case, it was there only he could seek him, and thither he accordingly repaired.

It was still early; the field of combat was however swept and prepared for action,—the windows were duly opened to ventilate the chamber, the blinds skilfully arranged to give equal shade and equal light to all parts of the table, the marker was in his place, and everything ready to begin the labours of the day. But though two or three sporting-looking characters were already in the room, and one of them beguiling the tedious moments of expectation by practising canons and hazards that to ordinary eyes appeared impossible, no business was as yet going forward.

The entrance of Whitlaw occasioned some sensation. He still wore the sort of youthful, curious, stranger-seeming look he had assumed the day before, and one of the loungers addressed him civilly with—

“Would you like to play a game, sir?”

It is said that a man may serve a good apprenticeship at Natchez for any trade practised at New Orleans, and Whitlaw proved the truth of this by answering—

“No, sir, thank ye, not now, because I’ve got business to do with one as I expect to meet here.”

In no country of the world do hawks willingly set about picking out hawks’ eyes; and our hero had no more inclination to make a trial of skill with this man, than he would with Whitlaw had he known him.

Having looked at every individual present, and satisfied himself that the person he sought was not among them, Whitlaw left the room and descended the stairs; but ere he reached the door of the house, the *clumsy player* appeared issuing from the side door into the passage. Their eyes met, and the stranger stepped forward to meet him.

“So! good day, sir. Would you like a glass this morning? If you’d please to walk this way, I expect we might be convenient for a few minutes’ talk.”

Whitlaw nodded in token of assent, and followed him in silence to a small room at the back of the building. It appeared expressly fitted up for *tête-à-tête* consultations like the present; for it held one little table, on which were placed two glasses, and a decanter of whiskey between them, flanked by two chairs and a spittoon.

“You came over that chap handsome yesterday,” said Whitlaw’s new acquaintance, seating himself on one of the chairs and pointing out the other to him. “’Tis seldom as I’m caught, but I’ll be d—d if I didn’t take you for a green one.”

"You weren't that slow neither, at last," replied Whittlaw; laughing. "I expect you caught me out as soon as I handled the tools?"

"Did I?—I calculate so. But 'tis few would have been so fine as you was over my play. There's lots of first-rate hands; that if they hadn't known me, would have watched me play that game; and never stumped me as you did."

These mutual compliments naturally paved the way for very confidential conversation, in which there was much more frankness and sincere avowal of principles and practice than are often found between such slight acquaintances. At length, the New Orleans professor, whose name was Crabshawly, expressed himself thus:

"I told you plump yesterday, Mr. Whittlaw," (for, among other unreserved avowals, they had mutually communicated their names,) "that I was willing to enter partnership with you, and I don't see no reason to draw back now. Only, as you swept stakes so clear yesterday, you may guess maybe, that you don't want no help from nobody; but bide a spell at New Orleans, and you'll see that won't go safe and smooth for a long run."

"I have no doubt that you speak correct, Mr. Crabshawly," replied Whittlaw. "I've done business enough myself, in a small way, up the country, to be up to that. But I should have thought that you had got hands enough in New Orleans, without looking out so sharp for new-comers."

"Natural enough you should think that, Mr. Whittlaw; and in honest truth, and without flattery, I must tell you that it don't chance over often that a new-comer would suit as a partner. But I'll be frank at once and tell you what it is. You see it most part happens that gentlemen of the profession are known, more or less, to the sporting gentry in and about the town, and then they grows shy, and though they'd most times sooner lose than not play, they won't go it boldly, and one must be at it sometimes a mortal long spell at a time before one makes a day's work; so that a fresh man that knows his tools, and understands how to look new, is worth money. You don't play that bad neither, I can tell you, for one that's not bred at New Orleans."

"I never play for what I can't make, you see, Mr. Crabshawly; and that's a mastership over one's-self that I expect many haven't got, and so I count my game surer than most men's, especially for the bets as runs upon the strokes; but I've no manner of objection to go shares with an understanding man like yourself, who may beat me a game or two before them as may like to try their chance after. I expect there must be company by this: shall we go?"

"No, no, Mr. Whittlaw; the New Orleans men of fashion beant

never early of a morning. There's no money worth winning there as yet, I'll answer for it; and besides, we must make our understanding more perfect, I expect, before we commence regular together. Do you undertake to give me half of all you win, if I give my time, experience, and talents, to poke the gudgeons into your net? I expect that's the question put fair, Mr. Whitlaw: and now, sir, for your answer."

Whitlaw paused for a minute or two, and then said bluntly: "I'll tell you fairly, Mr. Crabshawly, that I think I ought to try a spell before I do agree to that. You saw what I made yesterday; and wouldn't it go a little against the grain, d'ye think, to have to pay over the half of that to another?"

"And how much of that, young man, did you bag, only for my speaking that word about the notes? If you've a mind to try, why try, that's all I say; but if it don't answer, you mustn't be after expecting I'll be ready to offer the same terms after your newness is gone off."

Whitlaw felt quite aware that it would be far better to have Crabshawly for a friend than an enemy; but ere he finally accepted his proposal, he deemed it judicious to appear a little longer in doubt. While stretching out his legs and rubbing his chin in order to make this doubt appear, the idea struck him, that as law and justice could not help him to recover what he had lost, it was possible that knavery might; so turning to his companion with the air of a man who had at length decided a difficult question, he said,

"Well then, hear me, Mr. Crabshawly, and patiently, and I expect we shall come to an understanding. I am willing to agree to your terms: you shall have the half of all I make upstairs, provided you are always there when I want you, and always ready to play into my hands as your head and mine together can best contrive; and provided too that you find out, and will show up for me, all the best chaps in the place for me to hook-on to, and bring 'em here."

"Agreed!" replied Crabshawly, "'tis a match; and I can do that last job for you first-rate, for there arn't a man that's got a hundred dollars to lose but what I knows him. And now, let's just scratch a bit of an agreement between us, to make all clear on both sides."

"Devil a bit of that, my friend, I promise you!" returned Whitlaw sharply. "There's a saying, you know—'Honour among . . . ' and we must one and both trust to that or nothing: but as for signing and sealing, that's what I don't deal in."

It is probable that the wisdom manifested by the young man in this very decided answer raised his character as an "understanding chap" so high in the estimation of his new associate as to atone for the bluntness of the refusal; for he exhibited no resentment whatever and only replied with a wink and a nod,

"Very well, Whittlaw: I expect we be pretty nearly up to one another."

"I expect we be, Crabshawly," was the rejoinder, and the affair was settled.

Crabshawly now rose, saying, "Well, now we may mount if you please: but we're neither friends nor acquaintance upstairs, remember."

"Thank ye for nothing, my friend," replied Whittlaw; "that's taking me for green with a vengeance! But stop one moment, will you, while I jest ask you a word about two strutting fellows that I dined with at Mrs. Bennet's boarding-house yesterday. I expect they might turn out good for something, if I could scrape acquaintance with 'em. One's called General Holingsworth, and the other Major Tomlinson."

"I know 'em, I know 'em, considerable well," replied Crabshawly. "Money they've got to lose, that's a fact, and play of all kinds comes as natural to 'em both as to a kitten; but I dubiate if they arn't over much in our own line to be worth much. I don't mean they're that professional neither; but they're up to a thing or two, I promise ye."

"I expect so," said poor Whittlaw, with a sigh, which if he had not checked it in time, might have been mistaken for a groan. The information he had received, however, pleased him well; and eager as his new comrade was becoming for an immediate trial of their joint skill, Whittlaw told him he could not set-to for an hour or so, as he had just recollected business that must be attended to first.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE decided and violent accusation which Whittlaw had only a few hours before brought against General Holingsworth and Major Tomlinson before the magistrate, and still more perhaps the attack he had made upon them through the ears of their gentle landlady the preceding evening, would to any one but himself have appeared to present an insuperable obstacle to his cultivating any further acquaintance with these two gentlemen. But he trusted to his genius to overcome this, as well as all minor difficulties that might intervene to prevent the execution of a plan which he confidently hoped would both redeem and revenge his loss.

Whittlaw entertained not the slightest doubt that these two red-whiskered gentlemen were the thieves who had robbed him; and he certainly had very good reasons for coming to this conclusion.

He well remembered having pressed his precious pocket-book

against his heart, when preparing to enjoy himself in his favourite after-dinner attitude, after all the party except these two individuals had retired; he remembered feeling it, and even giving it a little push downward into the securest corner of the recess that held it, and it was, according to his judgment, impossible to doubt that his companions and no other were the abductors of his treasure.

Full of this persuasion, his first care on re-entering Mrs. Bennet's mansion was to request permission to speak to her.

She obeyed his summons with but short delay; but though the expression of her "fair round face" varied but slightly from that eternal sweetness with which "her gentlemen" were always received; still the acute eye of Whitlaw descried something in her soft grey eye, that, like the grain in the blue expanse of heaven so threatening to the mariner, seemed to foretell a coming storm.

Had he been less sure that he possessed the power to quell it, this might have alarmed him more. As it was, he approached her with his best smile, and said—

"I hope you will forgive me, my good lady, for the foolish blunder I made last night;—I really feel ashamed to think of it: but you always look so kind and so meek-tempered, Mrs. Bennet, that I trust you will not only forgive me yourself, but make my apology to the two gentlemen concerned, for what I was mad enough to say about them."

All trace of anger disappeared from the smooth face of Mrs. Bennet as these words greeted her ear, and with one of her prettiest smiles she said—

"Indeed, sir, I am very glad to hear you speak so; I was quite sure it must be some mistake. I hope you have found your money, sir?"

"No, Mrs. Bennet, I have not found my money, but I have found what was next best—I have found out where I lost it. I am afraid, madam, you won't think the better of me when I tell you that I was silly enough to go to a billiard-table for half an hour before dinner yesterday—and I won, I am almost ashamed to say it, a matter of twenty dollars. Well, Mrs. Bennet, I took out my pocket-book, ma'am, that my father gave me, with the money that I was to pay away for him—that is to say, part of it, for by good luck the largest sum I've got to pay was in my trunk; but I was fool enough, ma'am, to take out my pocket-book to put my winnings in, and down I laid it for a minute or two—'twas but a minute or two, Mrs. Bennet—upon the corner of the table, while I was counting out some silver change to make it square with the gentleman that paid me. When this was done, I took the pocket-book up again, but for certain never thought of looking into it. Well, this morning, after I had made such a fool

of myself as to go to the magistrate, down yonder, about my foolish suspicion of these gentlemen, I went again to the billiard-table, hoping to win a little more towards making up my heavy loss ; but while I was waiting for the table, an old gentleman said to me—' Wasn't you the gentleman,' says he, ' as put your pocket-book down for a minute yesterday ?'—and I thought for a minute and answered, ' Yes, that's a fact.' Upon which he said, ' And have you looked at it since, sir ?' and I said, ' Yes, indeed, and all my money is gone.' ' I thought so,' said the old gentleman, walking away, ' and let me advise you, young man, never again to put your pocket-book out of your hand at a billiard-table.' So you see, Mrs. Bennet, the thing is as clear as light, and all I can do now is to beg pardon for my foolish suspicions. Will you tell all this to the gentlemen?—and do you think they will forgive me ?"

All this was said with an air of so much youthful simplicity, that the good lady not only promised to set every thing right with her lodgers, but declared herself deeply concerned for the loss her new acquaintance had sustained ; and assured him that the general and the major, far from resenting what had happened, would be the most likely men in the world to endeavour to help him if any thing could be done for the recovery of his money or the punishment of the thief.

" And when do you think I could see them, madam, to receive their forgiveness ?" said Whittlaw.

" They mostly comes in to take a glass of wine and an oyster, sir, for their nooning, and it must be near upon the usual time."

" Where do they take it, Mrs. Bennet?—in the dining-parlour ?"

" Yes sir, always. Be sure that the cloth is laid, and every thing ready by now. Will you be pleased to walk in there, sir, and see ?"

" Why, to tell you the truth, Mrs. Bennet, I would much rather see them by themselves first : I should not have the face to mention my folly before all the other boarders."

" Dear sir, pray don't vex yourself any more about it. But there's the general's voice this minute, I'll run and tell him ; and if you'll be pleased to bide here a spell, I'll answer for bringing him to you,—and the major, too, 'tis likely, for they mostly goes and comes together."

Mrs. Bennet bustled out of the room, and in about ten minutes returned again, accompanied, as she had predicted, by both the whiskered gentlemen ; and having shown them in, she discreetly retired again and shut the door.

Few men so young as Whittlaw would have been able to go so steadily through the scene that followed as he did ; but nature had

gifted him with so decided a talent for dissimulation, that instead of pain or difficulty, it was really pleasure and sport to him.

The general and the major listened to his apology, as well as to the simple and juvenile history which followed it, very attentively and very civilly. They both begged to assure him that they retained not the slightest feeling of resentment, that nothing could be so natural as the blunder he had made, and that they sincerely hoped he would be able eventually to discover the real perpetrator of this abominable action.

After all these fluent civilities had been spoken and listened to, the major, who had a pair of very keen grey eyes in his head, began with great politeness what Whitlaw knew well enough was a sort of cross-examination of the history he had just delivered.

"I should hope, indeed," he said, "that this discovery will not be very difficult; for if this old gentleman you mention saw some one take up your pocket-book, I suppose he would have no difficulty in identifying him."

"No, no, my dear sir," said Whitlaw, shaking his head with the most innocent look in the world; "the old gentleman didn't say that—I wish he had! No; I asked him if he saw anybody touch it, and he told me he had not; but that there were fingers in that room that could whip notes out of a pocket-book in no time—and sure enough he was right."

"What notes had you, sir, in your pocket-book when you laid it down?" continued the curious Major Tomlinson.

"Exactly two thousand dollars, major."

"I think you said that you won twenty dollars: was that paid you in notes?"

"Ay, there was the mischief!—When I left home, gentlemen, I had two thousand and twenty dollars exact in my pocket, without counting other money; one hundred and twenty in silver, and the rest in notes. Well, you see, I won twenty dollars from a man I played with—an uncommon stupid player he was, to be sure,"—(here the general winked his eye at the major, which Whitlaw perceived more plainly than the person for whom it was intended,) "uncommon stupid, and I beat him, you see, and he gave me a great bill of a hundred dollars—and I was to give him change of course—and I had, you see, to take out this great bag," (drawing the canvass bag from his pocket), "and to count out eighty silver dollars upon the table. It must have been while I was doing this, and it wasn't long neither, that my notes were taken."

This explanation appeared to be satisfactory in every way to his attentive auditors; and after it was concluded, they expressed so much

kindness and concern, that when the trio entered the dining-room together to partake the nooning so liberally spread there, the amiable Mrs. Bennet had the satisfaction of remarking that there was every appearance of friendship and good fellowship between them.

It seemed, indeed, that the circumstance which had been at first likely to produce such hostile consequences was now producing a very contrary effect ; for after some social interchange of their respective wines, and sundry other civilities, they all agreed to go out together, in order, as the two red-whiskered gentlemen observed, to show the young stranger all that was best worth seeing in New Orleans.

They first directed their steps towards the part of the town where the shops most attractive to the ladies were situated, and thereby were enabled to point out to their new friend some of the most beautiful women in the world. But while indulging themselves and him in this agreeable lounge, they led the conversation to the subject of play.

"For my part," said Major Tomlinson, "I won't deny that I love play ; but I have infernal luck, that's a fact, and I've lost a d—d sight of money since I've been here."

"You don't say so!" said Whittlaw with a look of great pity and kindness.

"True, upon my soul! but I expect I must have grey hairs on my head before I'm cured ; and the cotton bales must pay for it, that's all."

"I'm afraid, for my part, that I've a few grey hairs already," observed the general, laughing ; "but I can't say I should altogether like to leave off play as yet,—'tis a devilish fine manly amusement, and that's a fact—but of course it's only fit for gentlemen who have got wherewithal to pay. I'm afraid, Mr. Whittlaw, this is a pleasure that you must forego, after your d—d unlucky loss. You must be pretty well cleared out, I take it?"

"Not so bad as that neither," said Whittlaw, laughing ; "I've enough of father's notes in my trunk still, though I won't say but what they are meant for other matters. However, as I see that my play is a deal better than some, I think that my loss is a reason the more for my playing, for I expect I might likely enough win again."

"To be sure you might," said the major ; "why not ? As far as I see, the play here is nothing at all particular for skill : I've seen play quite as good, I expect, at Charlestown. What say you, general ? 'tis unaccountable hot this morning—shall we go and try our luck for an hour ?"

"With all my heart, major, if Mr. Whittlaw has no objection."

"Why, I don't see why I should," said Whittlaw, "seeing that the only time I did play I won ; and of course, if I do indulge myself with a game, it's a great privilege to go to the table with gentlemen of

respectability. However," he added, laughing, "I expect I should like to play that same chap too if I happened to meet him, for I feel pretty sure I should beat him again. However, if I don't meet with him, I'd greatly rather play with either of you than with a stranger; though it's likely enough you'd be too hard for me."

"I don't know that, Mr. Whitlaw," said the major; "I can't say that I've much cause to boast this year. However, at any rate we'll have a try—not that I'll put you out of the way of a good thing if you meet him you played yesterday."

"But what table are we to go to?" inquired the general.

"Let's go to that one by the French Theatre," replied Whitlaw, "if it's all one to you, because it's there only I can hope to meet my man, you know; and I expect I'll make something if I do meet him."

"Certainly, by all means," said the general; "I'm sure it's all one to Tomlinson and me, so we do but get a game or two."

To the table near the theatre therefore they went; and on entering the billiard-room, the first face that met the eye of Whitlaw was that of Crabshawly. One glance, a very slight one, was exchanged between them; and then, each remaining in different parts of the room, trusted to each other's wit, for finding the means whereby they might mutually serve the common cause.

A game was going on which Whitlaw perceived to be a very unequal one. "That's a good hard fight, general, I expect—isn't it?"

"Why that's as may be to the parties, I haven't observed them much as yet," was the reply, made with about as much honesty as the remark that produced it. "But I wish they'd have done with it," continued Holingsworth, "that we might have a bit of a try together."

After some farther waiting, the general and Whitlaw got possession of the table. Major Tomlinson found means to exchange a word or two with his friend; and at the same moment Crabshawly skirted round, and continued with at least equal dexterity to give and receive tokens of intelligence on the other side. Could Asmodeus have contemplated that chamber, and read the thoughts that were at work there, his demonship might have found wherewithal to make exceedingly merry. On this occasion, it appeared to be Crabshawly's cue to seem sharp-witted, and on the alert to take advantage of the rustic Whitlaw's simplicity.

"You are going to play again, are you?" said he when Whitlaw took his place at the table.

"Yes, I am, sir; and you shall see that I won't lose the credit I've gained. I was half in a fright when I played first; but now I find what I can do, and you shall see that I'll play a deal better than I did then."

"Very likely, sir," replied the other with exactly the species of *fine* sneer calculated to catch the attention of those upon whom it was intended to work. "Very likely; but I hate to stand idle, and as I was in luck yesterday, I can afford to risk a little to-day; so I'll bet a hundred dollars on the gentleman you're going to play with, if you'll take it."

"Well, now," said Whittlaw, "I don't know what I ought to say to that. I have'n't seen the general play yet; and how do I know but he may do me?"

"Very true, very true," cried Tomlinson in a considerate and friendly tone. "Take my advice, Mr. Whittlaw, and don't bet high till you've tried your strength. The general is a pretty considerable player, and you are but a young hand, any how."

"Now that's what I call friendly," cried Whittlaw: "and so, sir," he added, turning to Crabshawly, "I'll bet you ten dollars on this first game, and not a cent more."

The game began; and to Crabshawly, who thoroughly understood what was going on, it was not only very interesting as it concerned his own profit, but exceedingly amusing. The skill displayed was not shown so much in the winning or even losing the game, as in the clever efforts on each side to discover the real strength of the adversary. And 'herein my hero had a very decided advantage; for he came to the combat with a tolerably correct notion as to who and what his opponents were, whilst all they knew of him was calculated to lead them astray as widely as possible.

Whittlaw of course won the game, and affected the most extravagant triumph upon it, declaring himself ready and willing to hazard the last dollar in his possession upon another. He was quite aware that General Holingsworth had *permitted* him to win; but nevertheless he suspected that his best play was not more sure than that of his late Kentuckian adversary: he saw that in steadiness of hand the advantage was greatly on his own side, and therefore determined if possible to make the next game settle the heavy account between him and his new friends.

The room was very full, and Crabshawly clearly proved his just right to the terms he demanded on entering upon the partnership, by the manner in which he contrived to draw the attention of those "who had money to lose" upon the wrong-headed young novice who was boasting both of his skill and his cash with what appeared to be the most reckless boldness and presumption. The consequence was, that Whittlaw, who watched and caught the eye of every one disposed to take a share in fleecing him with as much skilful quickness as the most practised auctioneer, began the game with bets that amounted to near three thousand dollars. If he won this, his loss,

after dividing with his associate, would be nearly covered : but as the two gentlemen, whom he still felt firmly convinced were sporting upon his own money, had not staked more than five hundred each, he would by no means have been fully satisfied by such a result ; and accordingly he risked, with a degree of temerity that Crabshawly witnessed in trembling, the loss of the whole sum, in the hope of indulging his revenge as much as his avarice in leading them on to risk more largely.

The first stroke was played by General Holingsworth, and was made with perfect success. Whitlaw looked at him, and uttered an oath that seemed to express alarm. He looked too, just as he was about to play, both at him and at the major, and read in the eyes of each a sort of scrutinising earnestness which led him to think they half suspected his rustic freshness. Far from being alarmed, however, he only felt the more strongly roused to exertion. He had on all such points unbounded confidence in himself : there was within him a fund of conscious cunning that it was his greatest pleasure to draw upon, and the glance of suspicion which he thought he read in the eyes of his adversaries but served to prick the sides of his intent, and send him onward in his trickery with renewed energy.

It would be but tedious to the reader were all the minute circumstances recounted by which the wily Whitlaw led on his opponents to the point he wished ; but it was done with such consummate skill, that even Crabshawly became alarmed, more than once feeling staggered and doubtful : nor was it till the hero of my tale stood triumphantly the winner of the enormous stake he had so cleverly contrived to play for, that this respectable person felt at all sure that he should pocket the half of it.

The room was in an uproar,—it was long since so many knowing ones had been taken in : but even to the last, amidst the intoxicating joy of success, and the taunting expressions of suspicion as to his character, which were whispered so as well enough to meet his ear, Whitlaw sustained his assumed simplicity to admiration ; and it is probable that among the twenty-five persons present, more than two-thirds of whom were losers, there was not a single one except Crabshawly who felt quite sure at last whether the game had been won by luck or skill.

“We will settle when we get home,” said Major Tomlinson, addressing Whitlaw with every appearance of easy good humour ; though if in truth he shared in the plunder of the pocket-book, his present loss more than doubled that gain—

“That will be the best way, general, with you too,” observed Whitlaw as he nodded assent.

The other winnings were gathered in on the spot with the usual

celerity attending such transactions, wherein the readiness to make payment seems in every person concerned to be in pretty exact proportion to the tardiness with which the same process is performed to their tradespeople. So great is the difference between honourable debts and debts of honour !

Before leaving the room, Whittlaw received notes to the amount of four thousand dollars ; and, ere he quitted the building, Mr. Crabshawly contrived very skilfully to make an opportunity of demanding the half of it.

" You shall have more, my fine fellow," said Whittlaw gaily, " I will pay you down at once the half of what the noble general and major have to pay me. Their money I shall have an especial and fanciful value for, and I will share it with no one."

This was not an arrangement that could be reasonably objected to, and accordingly Mr. Crabshawly had the satisfaction of receiving ere he parted with his valuable friend very nearly the whole four thousand dollars he had pocketed.

As Whittlaw again put up his empty pocket-book, something like a qualm come over him, lest Mrs. Bennet's fashionable lodgers should escape him. It was true that he had been assured of their wealth and standing by many ; yet the fact of their having jointly abstracted the notes that pocket-book had yesterday contained, which he was much too sagacious to doubt, now seemed as he again meditated upon it to offer an incongruity almost too violent to credit, when taken in conjunction with their high consideration in New Orleans. But he soon learned that these apparent contradictions might exist perfectly well together, and with a feeling of exceeding joy he once more perceived the two red-whiskered gentlemen take their honoured seats, one on each side the amiable and ever-gentle Mrs. Bennet.

As soon as the dinner was ended, the company retired as before ; and then, if any doubts still remained upon Mr. Whittlaw's mind upon the possible identity of persons who could steal a purse one day and pay a gambling debt the next, it was removed by the very satisfactory settlement of the morning's transaction.

While carefully and deliberately counting the notes he had received, and placing them one by one with rather ostentatious satisfaction in his pocket-book, he said with a very expressive smile,

" Well now, gentlemen, I'm not that sure, after all, that I'm any such unaccountable fine player ; but somehow I never lose money but I'm cock-a-hoop till I get it back again, and nothing stops me. If I hadn't lost them two thousand dollars out of my pocket-book, you may be certain sure I shouldn't be putting these four thousand into it. But that's always my way."

The general looked at the major, and the major looked at the gene-

ral, but neither of them spoke ; and the trio immediately after separated, with no particular wish probably to find themselves together again. Mrs. Bennet also declared herself "altogether glad," when she communicated to the party who assembled at breakfast on the following morning, that "the young chap who came up from Natchey way had paid his week and was off."

It is not necessary to follow our hero through any more of his gambling transactions. Enough has been already related to show the spirit and style in which he played ; and when the reader is informed that his subsequent success, though it sometimes varied, was such as to send him home, notwithstanding his very liberal spirit of self-indulgence, with much more money than he brought out, the affectionate interest naturally felt for him will, it is hoped, be fully satisfied.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WE must now follow Whitlaw to other scenes. Having with his constitutional discretion and forethought, removed from Mrs. Bennet's for fear he might again fall asleep in her dining-room, he once more fixed himself at a boarding-house ; and very reasonably conceiving that the money he had made entitled him to an evening's recreation, he decided upon going to a splendid ball which was to take place that night, where no ladies were admitted but quadroons, and no gentlemen refused who could pay for their tickets except blacks.

To an European eye the female part of the assembly would have suggested ideas of peculiar elegance and refinement. There is a flexile grace, a languid gentleness, a subdued and quiet softness, in the looks, movements, and manners of quadroons, which to those who know not their history, and share not in the strange and incomprehensible feeling which holds them indiscriminately as a race apart, despised, and contemned, let their personal and individual qualities be what they may, must ever have a powerful charm.

But to Whitlaw the fair pageant, though certainly not without its attractions, seemed the signal for letting loose all the worst feelings and passions of his nature. He stood gazing on the lovely groups with the boastful pride of a low-minded tyrant, who glories in the consciousness that he may insult with impunity all whom he beholds.

Among many other accomplishments for which this beautiful but most unfortunate race are celebrated, their dancing is one of the most remarkable ; and it has been said that a well-grouped quadron qua-

drille at New Orleans might rival in grace the most successful figure-dance ever exhibited at "le grand Opéra." Unfortunately for Whittlaw, the art of dancing was not one of those which he had cultivated; and though he certainly would not have scrupled to put out a score of dark-eyed beauties in their graceful measure if by so doing he could have in any degree amused himself, he thought that on the present occasion he should be more gratified by seeing them go right than in contriving to make them go wrong. He therefore sat himself down on a well-cushioned sofa, with the intention of deciding very much at his ease which was the most lovely girl in the room.

Some pretty and piteous episodes might be here indulged in description of individual loveliness and of gentle sweetness, that not even the iron fate which legally doomed them all to infamy from the hour they first drew breath could destroy. But wide as is the field for the purest sympathy and the holiest sorrow, it cannot be entered upon without the risk of encountering scenes from which the eye of human virtue must turn aside; while we may well believe that "the recording angel as he writes them down will drop a tear upon the words" that tell of frailty enforced by law, and affection which no ceremony is sufficiently holy to render legitimate.

This we may surely easily guess at and easily believe; but far be it from any mortal to judge with what species of immortal feeling those acts will be registered, by which one portion of the human race compel by law another portion to infamy and sin.

Leaving therefore all allusion to the adventures of the evening in which any of the graceful groups that danced before him were so unfortunate as to attract Mr. Whittlaw's particular attention, we must pass to a circumstance of a different kind, which soon obliged him to forget for the moment everything else.

It was in passing from the ball-room to the bar, at which refreshments of all kinds were furnished, that Whittlaw was arrested in his progress by a hand laid not very lightly on his shoulder. He suddenly turned, and encountered the well-known face of Hogstown, who has already been introduced to the reader at Natchez when forcing himself upon the notice of Edward Bligh.

"So here you are, my man!" exclaimed he. "The colonel told me I should be sure to find you.—Fine work we are likely to have, arn't we?"

Whittlaw expressed his ignorance of the particular events to which he alluded.

"Come this way, Whittlaw, for a spell, will you?—I promised the colonel to tell you everything; and I comprehend by him that our errands here—yours and mine, I mean—arn't that unlike.—There,

take your glass, pay you levy, and come with me into that snug corner there.

Whitlaw obeyed this directions very literally, and followed him.

"Well, I say, Whitlaw," resumed his Natchez acquaintance, "have you heard of the outbreak at Colonel Mirandau's? This is the second within ten days; and both comes of reading, and preaching, and praying, and such like diabolical exercises; and it comes, too, as I tell 'em all at Natchez, of that stingy, saving, niggardly, pitiful spirit, that makes 'em do anything rather than kill their niggers outright. You may scorch 'em, 'tis true; and skin 'em, and welcome, or anything else in the torture line that comes into your head; but there isn't one single planter between this and Natchez liberal and patriotic enough to hang one of his gang outright."

"Why, there's few that likes to make away with their own stock, that's a fact," replied Whitlaw. "But what is it, Mr. Hogstown, sir, that has happened over at Colonel Mirandau's? I've been considerable busy since I arrived, and haven't chanced to hear a word of it."

"Well, then, it's no joke, I promise you," replied Hogstown. "There's been one Bible and five tracts, and two hymn-books found hid in some of the nigger-huts on Colonel Mirandau's plantation.—That was a week or ten days ago; and yesterday as ever was, a young nigger, newly purchased in Virginia, was overheard, and right-down caught out, while reading out loud to a whole bevy of them a piece of a cursed old English newspaper, with a lot of infernal stuff in it about emancipation. Just think of that, Whitlaw, in a nigger-hut in Louisiana!"

"Confound the varmint!—and what was done to 'em?"

"Ay, there's the mischief. They was flogged all round, just as many lashes as they could stand without the pulse going; and then they was salted; and it done 'em no more harm than if they had been so many red herrings. But if the colonel had been liberal and only hanged three or four of 'em, we should have seen how the rest would have quaked. The varmint know the valy of their lives, and 'tis that makes 'em so malignant and rebelsome."

"'Tis very true, Mr. Hogstown, sir; but when a man has a gang of his own," replied Whitlaw, remembering with no little feeling of pride the three men, seven women, and ten children, that made the glory and profit of Mount Etna,—“when a man has once got together a gang, you will most times find 'em considerable against losing 'em, any how."

"There's more of profit than patriotism in that notion, Mr. Whitlaw, you won't deny that, sir. But, however, that's not much to the business in hand between us two. I expect that we are both of us

come to New Orleans pretty much in the same line, by what has been made known to me at Paradise Plantation ; only I am engaged for the public—the public of Natchez, I mean,—and you, as I take it, for Colonel Dart and nobody else. Now my instructions at starting was specially to find you out, and make you comprehend clear and distinct what it is we have got to perform.”

Whitlaw was struck, on hearing these words, with the recollection of Juno's promise that he should be instructed at New Orleans as to what he was to do. Many times since she spoke the words, he had thought of them with what he was now ready to confess was very unbecoming scorn, and he proposed to listen to the communications of Hogstown with silent and meek obedience.

“In the first place, Mr. Whitlaw, you must be pleased, sir, to tell me——”

At this moment a rush of company into the small room in which they had placed themselves rendered the continuation of so important a conversation impossible; and they mutually agreed that for the remainder of the evening they would amuse themselves with the scene they were in, and meet on the morrow in a private room at the hotel where Hogstown had taken up his quarters, for the purpose of giving and receiving both counsel and information on the important business which brought them to the city.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHITLAW, notwithstanding the late hours of the preceding evening, was punctual to his appointment, and found Mr. Hogstown engaged in examining a daily advertiser, from which he was making memoranda of all the runaway negroes.

“Good morning, Mr. Whitlaw. Here it is, you see : thirty-one—thirty-two—thirty-three ; no less than thirty-three cursed runaways in this one paper and this one State ! I'll be hanged if a man didn't ought to chain up every individual one of the black beetles the identical instant they have done finished their work : and if there was a State obligation to that effect, we should soon progress towards a betterment in our management of them.

“I have no doubt in the world of it, sir,” replied Whitlaw in an accent of very earnest sincerity ; “but let us conduct so as to arrive at a mutual comprehension of how we can come to an exchangeability of usefulness in this matter.”

"I desire no better, Mr. Whitlaw; and to take up just where we stopped last night, I must tell you, sir, that I have been desired to make a requirement of you as to all the light you can throw upon the character and behaviour of a family that neighbours close upon your father's store at Mount Etna. They conduct so as to be considerably remarked in the country. They are Germans, I expect, Mr. Whitlaw; but as for the name, you must excuse my liableness to forget it, seeing it's a strange one."

Whitlaw's eyes emitted a flash of triumph as he listened to this speech. A hundred bitter thoughts that lay rankling at the bottom of his heart started into fresh life at the idea of being at length able to do the hatred Steinmark an injury, and he eagerly answered—

"Throw a light upon our German neighbours, Mr. Hogstown?—There's few that can do it better, I expect. Why, I've lived within a stone's throw of 'em best part of my life, and a dangerous set they are as ever imported themselves into a country."

"That responds considerable to what I've heard, Mr. Whitlaw; and I'll just tell you, to avoid any involvement of misunderstanding, what the secret managing committee of Natchez holds to be the best card they've got to play at the present alarming crisis. You see, sir, 'tis as plain as the sun's in heaven, that the planters and slave-holders, considered as a body, are at a great remove from advocating the punishment of death among their stock. Now, it is naked folly to fancy that there's anything else but death will make an impression any way worth publication to the country: and so you see, Mr. Whitlaw, if slaves mustn't die, white men must, that's a fact."

"I think I progress towards understanding you, Mr. Hogstown. We shall have to examine, I expect, into the conduct of the Steinmark family; and if it's found to be derogatory to the usual feelings of white men and slave-owners, something of the nature of Lynch law might be usefully introduced among them."

"Depend upon it, sir, there would be considerable advisability in this. It will issue in danger if something is not done to stop the notion that's getting abroad, that niggers are to be taught and tutored like Christians. It's very illy done of these Germans to cultivate their estate, as we are told they do, altogether without slaves: which is just as much as to say, that slavery isn't needful. I expect Mr. Whitlaw, that you can tell whether this accusation against 'em is repealable or not?"

"The accusation's as true, let who will have made it, as that black's black, and that white's white. I tell you, Mr. Hogstown, I've known them for years, and never did a slave do a turn of work for any of 'em since in the country they've been."

"Well, sir, that's satisfactory so far, and not to be contradicted, I expect. And now, there's another point, upon which if we can make

a hit, I calculate something considerable important might issue. There's a young fellow that has taken to living at a clearing in the forest somewhere between Natchez and this German's farm. I don't take my pay for nothing, Mr. Whittlaw, and would on no account miss an opportunity of cultivating any observations that may be useful. I had occasion, not that long ago, to watch this young fellow, called Bligh, as I understand, at the place where he keeps; I had a fine occasion to watch his behaviour, when a little nasty stinking nigger was lucky enough to make a merriment for some gentlemen of the highest standing in Natchez. First, he turned deadly pale when they kicked the boy, and then he downright hid his face and his eyes, because, I calculate, he couldn't bear the seeing the varmint rolled about and in trouble; and last of all, though he looked as poor as corn-meal and ditch-water, what did he do, but out with his money to get the smut out of the scrape, because he'd lost some coppers through the gentlemen's joking. Now, that was particular, war'nt it?"

"Very!" replied Whittlaw solemnly. "Go on."

"Well, sir, I kept my eye upon him; and when he left the store where this happened, I followed round-about fashion, till I saw him reading over all the bills posted up about the market concerning the sale of niggers, and the runaways, and all the rest of the nigger news. Well, sir, I stopped still a spell, and then I got into a little exchangeability of talk with him. As to his sayings, he was not that venturesome to expose himself; contrarywise, he was curious clever to keep safe, I thought: but he couldn't hide from me that his talk had no agreement with his shabby jacket, and I was obligated to conclude that he was more or less an impostor. Well, sir, this negro-lover, this shabby-dressed and fine spoken youngster, is hand-in-glove with the whole Steinmark family; and there's some that say he is to marry the daughter. That's no great matter, certainly, one way nor t'other; but it's curious singular that this chap, what can't abide the sight of a kicked nigger, should be so everlasting intimate with them as won't hold a slave, though all the country knows they're rich enough to have a gang of five hundred. Don't you perceive, Mr. Whittlaw, how the two things hitches together?"

"Don't I, Mr. Hogstown? I expect I do, sir: and I tell you what, though I'm in no hurry to leave New Orleans,—that is, not before my duty and my business is done finished,—yet this is what I know and am ready to testify, that nothing I or you either can be after doing here will help the cause one quarter so much as blowing up them incarnate devils at Reichland,—the Steinmarks, I mean. If there's mischief brewing in one quarter, it comes from them: you may as well doubt that a nigger's black. Where will you find another rich man as don't own a slave? and what can it mean, coming as it does

too from the d—d Europe side of the water, but emancipation and treason? Maybe we're all of us in a bad way; I don't know but we shall find it so: but this I do know, that if there's any hope left, it will be by making an example of those cursed emancipation chaps, the young Steinmarks."

"Well, sir," replied Hogstown gravely, "I can't but approve the zeal you show; and I shall not fail to report your information and your opinion to the gentlemen of our Natchez committee. But you see, Mr. Whitlaw, the thing must be done with judgment, and noways in a bustle,—at least not on our parts, that guides the springs, as I may say. There will be no objection, of course, that the mob, when we set them on their work of doing justice, should be that little degree infuriated as may be necessary for the executioning their business; but I would recommend you, sir, to be quite peaceable and reasonable in your way of giving evidence, and upon no account seem to have any reasons of your own private concerns to urge your speaking, but altogether the public good, and love of justice, and respect for our glorious constitution, and veneration for the memory of the immortal Washington,—and the ever-to-be-venerated Jefferson, both of whom approved the institution of slavery, and practised it greatly to their own comfort and advantage. I beg your pardon, Mr. Whitlaw, for taking the liberty of advising you, sir; but you are a young man, and don't rightly know perhaps as yet, the vast importance of putting things in a right light, particularly when addressing any meeting of the people;—and that, I take it, sir, is what we shall be expected to do, if we entertain any hopes of getting up a Lynch-law execution at Natchez."

"No offence at all, Mr. Hogstown. Honest men that are true and hearty in a cause, like you and I, sir, must not stand upon ceremony together, but just speak out what they think; and so I recommend you, first and foremost, to keep your eye upon them Steinmarks, one and all of course, but most particularly upon him as keeps the mill. Take my word for it, he is one that will raise the niggers to mutiny if any one can—I know him; and if Lynch-law must be had, 'tis him as I'd try the first go upon."

"You may depend upon it, sir, that your recommendation shall not be lost sight of in any degree," replied Hogstown. "And now I think we may each go to our separate work, and learn all we can of the goings on and intentions of the principal slave-holders here. I take it for granted that you have got letters of introduction to some of the first planters, for Colonel Dart is a gentleman exceedingly well respected, and knows the nature of the business we have in hand too well not to set you upon getting all the private news on the subject to be obtained at New Orleans."

"Why, yes, Mr. Hogstown, I have got letters pretty considerable.

Is there anything else, sir, that you can point out as desirable in the way of my duty?"

"Not at the present moment, Mr. Whitlaw; but it may be as well to meet once a day, I expect. Will you be pleased to call on me here again to-morrow, sir? And if we either of us pick up intelligence of any kind, the other may profit thereby."

Whitlaw thanked him very cordially for his obliging proposal, and having promised to wait upon him on the morrow, took his leave, not perhaps altogether pleased at finding that he should for the future be really obliged to sacrifice some portion of his precious time to business, but more than consoled for it by believing that he should be able at his return to gratify the hatred he had so long vainly nourished against the family of Steinmark.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHEN old Juno first imagined the expedient of getting rid of Whitlaw by sending him off to New Orleans, she was too much delighted at the idea to delay the execution of it till she had fabricated in her busy brain some errand that might really give him occupation there; and his instructions were in consequence so vague, that till the future information at which the prophetess had so mysteriously hinted should reach him, he very naturally thought he might consider himself as his own master.

When, however, Hogstown crossed his path in the manner described, the superstitious young man doubted not for an instant that it was this meeting which had been predicted; and this persuasion, together with the agreeable information respecting the suspicions thrown on the Steinmarks, determined him to set about doing what was required of him, as far indeed as he comprehended what it was, with all diligence and activity.

The delivery of the letters with which he was charged, was what he now determined to set about; and as he walked towards the mansion which the geography of the city had taught him was first in order, he taxed his memory to recall the various verbal instructions given him with each packet, for the purpose of making him acquainted with the position and standing of the parties, and to instruct him in the best mode of turning each and every of them to profit. The general instructions were clear and intelligible enough, and not easily forgotten;—namely, that in every instance where Colonel Dart's letters obtained

him entrance into a family, he was to keep in mind during his intercourse with every individual of it, that the object of his journey was to ascertain, as nearly as possible, the feelings and opinions of the inhabitants of New Orleans on the state of the slave population, and of the dangers said to threaten the continuance of the system.

All this he remembered well; but he remembered also, that not one of the six letters he carried was given to him without some special and peculiar instructions which the careful and anxious Colonel Dart fancied might be useful.

He opened the whole packet as he walked, and scanned the address of each letter, in the hope that the sight of the name and residence might recall what it was so essential for him to remember.

"Monro Barbacuit, Esq." was the name that first met his eye; and it instantly recalled to him an anecdote that Colonel Dart had recounted, and of which, as Whitlaw believed, this gentleman was the hero, stating that when a partial revolt of slaves on one division of his estate occurred, it had been met and checked by the greatest personal bravery and presence of mind on his part; and that such was the effect of this well-timed display of firmness, that not only was no farther danger anticipated from that quarter, but the example was considered as having been of the most signal service throughout the whole neighbourhood.

"George Washington Bobbin, Esq." followed next.

"Ay!" thought Whitlaw, "I remember that name too. That's the man that was caught t'other day changing a lame nigger baby, born on his own estate, for a bouncing brat of a piccaniny that belonged to a neighbour. But he's curious rich, so nobody says nothing about it; and I must take care to make no allusion to healthy children, or anything of that sort."

"Adams Byron Chesterfield Higgins, Esq." muttered our hero as he continued his progress. "That's him as wants a bill brought into Congress, for leave to fit out a few ships to make prize of all the craft caught off the coast of Liberia, with licence to dispose of the crews and cargo, black or white, at pleasure. That's a fine young fellow! success to him, any how!"

"Zerubbabel Theodore Octavius Cobb, Esq. That's a puzzler." Whitlaw walked with his eyes fixed on the name, or rather names, for several minutes, and then exclaimed, "I can't remember one syllable about him!"

The next was a very modest address,—Mr. John Croft. "Oh! that's the man newly come from England to sell that fine estate at Nixon, and we want to buy it a bargain: that's nothing to do with slaves or slavery, for the gangs upon it belong to his tenant. I mind all about that."

The sixth and last letter was directed to Brutus Pennyfeather, Esq.

and this also brought its own history to his memory, for Mr. Penny-feather was a merchant who dealt largely with Colonel Dart for cotton.

His first visit was at the house of Mr. Bobbin. He was ushered with a vast deal of creole pomp into a splendid drawing-room, the furniture of which was no bad specimen of Parisian elegance. The walls of the room were half covered with enormous mirrors; marble tables of all sorts and sizes displayed a large collection of Sèvres china; ottomans, sofas, and bergères were invitingly placed in all parts of the spacious room; and the atmosphere was deliciously scented by tuberoses, orange-flowers, and jessamines. The light and heat of the day, which was extremely sultry, was only permitted to enter through coloured canvass blinds, continually sprinkled with water on the outside, and stretched over an ample balcony filled with the finest flowers.

On first entering this elegant apartment, Whittlaw believed it to be quite untenanted, and that deep-seated reverence for wealth which had ever been a strong feature in his character caused him to look round it with a feeling of respect that almost led him to prostrate himself in a salam upon the delicately-tinted matting which covered the floor. It was not till the second and more leisurely survey which he took of its enviable splendour, that he perceived a very young, little, round, pale, black-eyed woman sunk deep into a kangaroo chair with one or her little feet dangling from it, and the toe of the other supported on the shoulder of a young negro boy fantastically dressed, who sat on the floor before her. She was placed in the corner of the room, and a large orange-tree, covered with blossoms, so arranged as to form a sort of canopy over her. Her attitude was one that might have rendered rising difficult to any woman, but to a creole it was impossible. She therefore clapped her miniature white hands together; and though the sound produced was scarcely louder than what might have followed a similar concussion between two little balls of cotton, it was heard and obeyed by another black fairy in the dress of an oriental page, turbaned and trowsered in delicate white muslin, with a tiny vest of yellow satin, belted with gold.

She murmured something into the child's ear, who immediately took an ivory fan from off a table, and approaching Whittlaw, presented one end of it to him, and so led him forward towards his mistress, it being contrary to creole etiquette that a white skin should touch the hand of a negro.

At the distance of about two yards from the living but apparently immovable footstool, the well-tutored little usher stopped, and withdrawing the fan from the hand of the stranger, stood ready to execute the next order he should receive, whether it were to advance a *sauterail* for his service, or to lead him back to the door by which he entered.

The little beauty, from amidst her flowing, floating, very loose, and very thin white drapery, looked out and up to the handsome face of

our tall hero, and the signal for the *fauteuil* was given, but so slightly and so silently that it escaped the senses of Whitlaw. He understood, however, that the chair was intended for him, and he took possession of it with perhaps more satisfaction than grace.

"I have a letter, madam," he began, seeking for his credentials as he spoke,—“a letter to Mr. Bobbin from my friend Colonel Dart. Will you be pleased to receive it for him, madam?”

"Yes, sir, you may give it to me;" and the little white hand was extended, or rather raised, about two inches from the lap on which it rested.

It was rather instinct than politeness which made Whitlaw start forward to place the letter between the delicate fingers prepared to receive it; and in doing it, he bent his head so low, that the lady's other hand, which rested in a languid, drooping attitude against the side of her high chair, while her shoulder supported her head, passed over his curls with very little effort, and she said,

"How your hair curls!—Where do you come from?"

"From Natchez, madam."

"Natchez!—are all the men handsome there?"

"Not all, I expect, madam."

The little lady laughed immoderately.

"Oh, you expect!—that's charming!—Do sing Yankee Doodle for me, will you? You are so very handsome, that I am quite sure you must be good-natured."

"I should be very happy to do anything that could please you, madam," replied Whitlaw, who, though half affronted at her request, or rather at the manner of it, was enchanted both with her beauty and her compliments,—“anything that I could do; but I'm not capable to sing, for I don't know how."

"Oh, what a pity! you would look so handsome when you were singing! You don't know that I am Mr. Bobbin's lady? Do I look old enough to be married?"

"You look like an angel, madam!" was Whitlaw's gallant reply.

Again a fit of violent but very soft-toned laughter waved the light drapery which hung like a transparent cloud about the beauty; but suddenly checking herself, she addressed the little automaton at her feet, in a voice that was as sharp as she could contrive to render her languid tones.

"Tu as bougé, Pompey!—tu auras le fouet." Then raising her eyes again to Whitlaw, she said,

"Do you love orange-flowers?"

"I am sure I shall always love them in future," said Whitlaw, directing his eyes to the beautiful blossoms that seemed ready to drop upon her pretty head, "for they will always remind me of you."

She again clapped her little hands, and her negro page entered as before, when she again whispered to him, and the child disappeared through the open window into the balcony, from whence he quickly returned with his dingy hands filled with delicate orange-blossoms.

The fair lady made a sign to the child, who was advancing to her with them, saying,

“A lui, bête!”

Whitlaw, however, put his hands behind him as the page drew near, exclaiming, “No! madam, no!—from no hand but your own, and least of all from a nigger’s; but if you’ll be pleased to give them to me, I’ll keep them for ever, by G—d!”

As if it were her doom upon the present occasion to “laugh loud laughs three,” the youthful mistress of the mansion again gave way to mirth, but soon recovered herself and said very obligingly,

“Well, then, Olinda must give them to you herself, I suppose. Come here!”

Whitlaw drew near with unfeigned satisfaction, and, as if inspired by the occasion, actually knelt down beside the footstool negro.

Olinda looked at him very complacently, and either smelling or kissing the flowers she had received from her page, or both, she placed some of them in his hand, and threw the rest in his face, saying,

“There, then!—now you may go,—I will give my husband the letter, and perhaps he will ask you to dinner,—I hope he will. Adieu!” And she waved him off with the childish air of a little girl playing queen.

In truth the pretty Olinda was still a child in age; and such, if report say true, are the childish ways of some of the little ladies of New Orleans.

Luckily for young Whitlaw, his head was not one of those likely to be turned and over-turned by such pretty fooleries so as to make him forget more serious business. “If I’d nothing else to do,” thought he, “I might like well enough to waste a few hours in that there paradise of a keeping-room.—But now for Mr. Monro Barbacuit; for, if I don’t mistake, he lives in the next street.”

He was here fortunate enough to find the person to whom the letter he brought was addressed; and having delivered it, he waited in silence while Mr. Barbacuit read the contents.

“Sit down, sir, sit down,” said little Mr. Barbacuit, a pale thin personage of five feet four inches and a half.

“What a flimsy-looking little fellow,” thought Whitlaw, “to stand up so grandly against a gang of nigger rebels!”

Had our hero’s mind been stored with classic lore, he would doubtless have exclaimed in some language or other,

"And dwell such mighty souls in little men!"

But not having this advantage, he only contemplated the comical little figure before him with a strong suspicion that the report of his prowess must have originated with himself; and the practical inference he drew from this conclusion was, that nothing would be so likely to propitiate the friendly feelings of Mr. Barbacuit, as referring to a transaction wherein by his own account he had acted so noble a part.

Having waited therefore till the perusal of the letter was finished, he said, while the little man was folding it up, "You perceive, Mr. Barbacuit, that all nigger outbreaks are not confined to New Orleans, —my friend and employer Colonel Dart lives in constant terror of the same.—Ah! sir, I wish we had got you among us!"

"Good God, sir! what does that mean?" exclaimed the hero. "What could I do, sir? Do you mean that the black malice of the varmint would exhaust itself on me? Is that Colonel Dart's notion, sir?"

"Lord, no, sir!" answered Whitlaw, quite shocked at having given occasion for such a suspicion: "Colonel Dart never dreamed of no earthly thing like it. I only meant, sir, that it would be a comfort to have such a brave gentleman as you are near us in case of the worst."

"In case of the worst!—Good God! I to be moving about the country just to pop in at a rebellion in case of the worst! Why, sir, I'm thinking of selling all, if it can be done without too horrid a loss, and shipping myself off for France, just to get out of the way of these born devils,—that's what I'm after thinking of *in case of the worst*."

"I do assure you, sir, replied Whitlaw, "I would be much readier to help such a valuable gentleman as you out of danger than into it. But it is impossible not to keep thinking at times what a fine thing bravery is, especially when one hears of such pitiful, mean, cowardly tricks as some slave-holders don't scruple to do, gentlemen though they are, or ought to be from their standing. But 'tis impossible not to glorify a man that will stand up against a roused gang of malignant varmint like you did, Mr. Barbacuit, when one likens him to such a mean thievish rascal as him as stole his neighbour's thriving piccany t'other day, and left a crippled one in its place. Warn't that man a mean fellow, Mr. Barbacuit!—and he to be a slave-holder too!"

Mr. Barbacuit's pale complexion assumed a tint of livid blue as he listened to these words; and in the rage and agony which possessed him, he pulled the bell violently, though he knew that the summons could only bring one or more of the feared and hated race to his succour; but even they would save him from the cool, deliberate insults his visiter was pouring upon him.

"Show this gentleman out," stammered the master of the mansion;

and as the slave held wide open the door of the room, Whitlaw felt that nothing was left him but to walk though it: which in truth he did with as little delay as possible, for the thought had struck him that he must have unhappily bestowed the speeches intended for the bold, fighting queller of riots, upon the peaceful but pitiful kidnapper of children. Determined however upon satisfying his mind on the subject, he drew a splendid quarter of a dollar from his pocket as he approached the door of the house, and slipped it into the negro's hand, saying, as he lingered a moment on the steps,

"I say, blacky, arn't there a good story going about somebody liking a straight piccaniny better than a crooked one?" And the words being accompanied by a wink and a grin, the thoroughly propitiated slave answered with a chuckling He! he! he! "Sure nuff, massa—and no lie neder."

"And 'twas him as done it?" added Whitlaw with an expressive action of his thumb, pointing it backwards across the hall.

"Sure-ly, massa, sure-ly,—he! he! he!"

Vexed, provoked, and in some degree frightened at his own carelessness, Whitlaw muttered within his teeth as he hurried from the door,

"D—n their instructions! I wish the old witch was here herself to tell me who's who."

Hardly was the thought formed into words, than the figure of Juno, very decently clad, however, but still the figure of Juno, came down a side street and stood before him.

All the floating superstitions of Whitlaw's brain seemed to crowd and settle round his heart as he recognised her. She still carried her bamboo, but it was now used as a needful walking-stick, to support the steps of a feeble-looking but very tidy old woman.

It would have been worse than "a misdoubting of Providence," if Whitlaw had not availed himself of this seemingly miraculous arrival of the counsellor he had wished for. With considerably more than usual respect he addressed her—

"You are just the person, mother, as I wished to see. I am glad to see you look so hearty too."

"And what has Mr. Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw to say to me?" said Juno in return, while a new change seemed to have come over the spirit of her vagaries; for her manner was staid and steady, and her accent and pronunciation most punctiliously those of the educated English.

"Why, I want you to tell me—only this street is so unaccountable public,—can't I go with you to your lodgings for a spell? 'Twould look queer maybe if I took you to mine."

"The least queer of the two, Mr. Whitlaw, I think; but neither is necessary. If you really have business with me, I can walk be—

fore you down this street for about a hundred yards, which will bring us into a drying ground—none but black or coloured people are likely to be there, so there is no fear of incivility though we should intrude on them. I suspect, Mr. Whitlaw, that all business between you and I is pretty well over; nevertheless, for old acquaintance' sake, I am ready to wait upon you so far."

"Thank you, Juno, thank you," replied Whitlaw, more than ever impressed with the conviction of her supernatural powers; "I will follow wherever you please, and thank you too."

Without farther parley, old Juno set off by the way she came; and just at the distance she had described, a large open space received them, around which were scattered many small, miserable-looking dwellings, inhabited by free negroes and quadroons who took in washing.

"Here, sir, you may say whatever you please," said the old woman, turning round to him; "nobody is at all likely to hear you, and less likely still, if they did, to notice what you say."

"It's just this, Juno," said Whitlaw, in a sort of coaxing accent that made the keen-eyed old woman smile, spite of her assumed stateliness. "Here are lots of letters, you see, from our colonel: and when he gave them to me, he told me a deal about every one of them;—and you, too, if you remember—you told me what was to be said to one, and not to another; and, as ill luck would have it, I have forgot it all,—or, worse still, I've gone done mixed it all up in one, putting wrong names and things together till I'm in a right-down bad fix."

"Let me see them, sir, if you please."

Whitlaw placed the remaining letters in her hand.

"I've given in two of them already," said he. "The first was to Mr. Bobbin, and that did very well, for I saw his wife; but the second I made curious bad work of, for I thought that Mr. Barbacuit was the gentleman as stood up so against the rebellion, and I complimented him about it up sky-high; and, worse than that by half, I talked to him of the mean fellow as left the crippled brat in the place of the thriving one; and I thought he'd have gone demented, sure enough."

Not all the decorum and gravity which old Juno was so evidently struggling to maintain could resist this anecdote, so well calculated to delight her in every way. She laughed till tears rained plenteously from her eyes, and her stout bamboo shook beneath the weight she threw upon it. Even the frightened Whitlaw caught the infection, and laughed too; and it was this indeed, rather than the fading away of her own mirth, which restored her composure.

"Well, sir!—respecting which of these names," and she began to examine them as she spoke, "do you wish information?"

"All of them, Juno."

Juno proceeded to read the titles, which the bright sky of New Orleans enabled her to do, though not without some difficulty, for her eyes were not quite so good as they had been; though, like all her faculties, her sight was much less impaired than is usual at her age.

"Zerubbabel Theodore Octavius Cobb—that's a man whose assistance may be very valuable to you, Mr. Whitlaw, should any commotion among the negroes at Paradise Plantation render it advisable to call in assistance. His influence among the coloured people is quite astonishing. The very sight of him I should think likely to produce a prodigious effect."

"That's good," replied Whitlaw; "I'll make much of him, you may depend upon it."

"You will do quite right, sir.—Brutus Pennyfeather. This is the person of whom Colonel Dart desired you would request a few of his best conditioned slaves at almost any price: do not forget this, Mr. Whitlaw,—it may chance to be very important.—Adam Byron Chesterfield Higgins. This is quite a young man, but not perhaps the less important for that reason. He has some great and very liberal views on many subjects. You must make him understand that Colonel Dart enters warmly into all his projects, and is ready to assist him with money and interest."

Whitlaw nodded. "I think I shall remember them all now," said he, stretching out his hand for the letters. "There is but one more, and that's to the Englishman: I know what I've got to say to him well enough."

The eyes of Juno fell upon the name of Croft at the moment she was about to give back the packet.

"I had forgot this," she said in an altered voice: "This letter is useless," she added, tearing it in fragments; "you have no occasion to visit this person at all."

"That's strange though," said Whitlaw, "because it was plain to me that my calling on Mr. Croft was my most particular business of all. This is the man, Juno, who is come over-sea to sell that first-rate fine estate that the colonel wants to get hold of,—Nixon, you know, Juno—there's no land like it. I shall catch it, I expect, for your tearing that letter up."

"No, sir, no!" cried Juno impatiently; "the colonel has no longer any wish to buy that land; therefore your calling on Mr. Croft could only be useless trouble, and wasting time that you might turn to better account at New Orleans, Mr. Whitlaw."

"I expect that's true, too," he replied, perfectly persuaded that she was alluding to her occult knowledge of his successful play, and that her words predicted continued good fortune. "I won't waste no more

time than I can help, I promise you that, Juno ; and so good morning. We shall meet again, I suppose, at Paradise Plantation before long ; but in case I should want a touch of your help, or your knowledge, Juno, or the like, I should like to know where you bide in the city. Is it a long remove from here ?—I expect not."

"When you want me, you will find me," replied Juno, with a touch of her wonted mysticism.

"And that's true again, I have no doubt ; I don't forget this morning, and so good-b'ye."

Juno gave a silent nod in return, and then waved her bamboo, as in days of yore, in sign of dismissal. The signal was immediately obeyed, and they parted ; Whittlaw pursuing his way to the abode of Mr. Pennyfeather, and Juno retreating to the obscure quarter where she made her home.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WHITLAW'S eagerness to find himself again at the billiard-table was very greatly increased by the manner in which he fancied that Juno had alluded to the success that would attend him there. Nevertheless, he determined for many reasons—among which, perhaps, his secret belief that Juno knew all his actions was not the least powerful—to deliver his three remaining letters while her instructions respecting them were still fresh in his memory.

As nothing of importance to the narrative occurred at either of the houses he visited—as he committed no more blunders, and made acquaintance with no more dispensers of orange blossoms, we shall pass over all that related to them in silence.

He contrived to get all this business done by an early hour in the evening, and then repaired to the neighbourhood of the French Theatre, once again to propitiate the goddess he adored. Though it is not necessary to follow him there, in order again to witness his skilful display of all the talents most valued and best rewarded in that region, it may nevertheless be observed in passing that he was again eminently successful, as this will serve to explain his disobedience to the last injunctions received from Juno.

It was while enjoying that delicious wakefulness which sometimes results from having too many pleasant thoughts at work within one for the approach of sleep to be either wished for or permitted, that our hero conceived the magnificent idea that he might perhaps himself become the purchaser of the Nixon property. A few more such

nights and the thing might be done, even if he had a Yankee instead of an Englishman to deal with. Even suppose that luck might not continue to run quite so much in his favour, he was pretty sure that on such security his father might easily be induced to help him "pretty considerable:" in short, before his sleeping had succeeded in chasing his waking dreams, he had fully decided upon calling on Mr. John Croft on the morrow.

His first sensations on waking were delightful. The present, actual, and certain state of his pocket-book, together with the probable and future state of his fortune, opened upon his mind as brightly as the sun shot through his mosquito curtains; and he sprang from his bed with the alacrity of a refreshed wrestler prepared for new struggles and new triumphs.

Nothing could exceed the delicacy of the breakfast with which he opened the history of the day. Having locked up his precious pocket-book in his trunk, and locked up his trunk in a closet, and locked up the closet in his bed-room, despite the probable anathemas of the slave whose task it was to "fix his chamber," he sallied forth, leaving the substantial comforts of the boarding-house breakfast behind him, and with conscious extravagance, but well-merited indulgence, entered the Paris-like saloon of the most celebrated restaurant in New Orleans.

The *carte* was put into his hands; and as an English version of its contents was considerably appended, Mr. Whittlaw soon saw the marble table before him assume an aspect which made him in the inmost recesses of his soul do honour to the game of billiards.

Immediately before him lay a snow-white napkin, enveloping a small loaf almost as white; a baby chicken, hardly exceeding the age at which Elia would have chosen his pig, lay fried and cradled amidst delicately green corn. To the right, two Maintenon cutlets of the same infantine dimensions contrasted their transparent paper clothing with the wreath of grilled oysters which surrounded them. To the left, exhaling an odour which none but an eater can understand, reeked one of those matchless wild-fowl, which to taste, or even to dream of with some touch of truth, one must cross the Atlantic. And then, here and there, in most admired disorder, but all within reach of the commanding hand, stood a cooler crammed with ice, from which peeped up a tall thin neck, encircled with a necklace inscribed "Chablis,"—while another, of like fashion, announced itself as Champagne. At one corner, slices of pine-apple were laid temptingly on ice; at the answering one appeared figs of most rare quality, but, as if to keep them warm instead of cold, each one closely enveloped in three or four of its own thick rich leaves; and in and out among them all were sundry minor dainties too numerous to mention.

For one long but too fleeting hour did Whitlaw sit before this little table ere the glass beside him rang to the touch of his knife; and then the fragrant bowl of coffee entered, flanked by the little glass of Cogniac. At length the joy was ended, and the bill was paid—almost without a sigh; and Jonathan Jefferson stepped forth in his strength, with the ardent hope of achieving that by barter and address which should for ever furnish forth such banquets.

He had now no letter to deliver, nor any other introduction to offer than what his own wit could suggest. But his breakfast had in some sort inspired him, and he rang Mr. Croft's bell with a strength and courage made up of the remembrance of his swelling pocket-book and iced wine.

The Englishman was sitting with his daughter in a pleasant parlour which opened upon a garden filled with oleander and orange-trees. The young lady was practising the harp; and excepting the face of Lotte Steinmark, which he had not yet quite forgotten, Whitlaw thought he had never seen any thing so beautiful as the countenance that was raised upon him as he entered the door.

Notwithstanding the proverbial shyness of Englishmen, they seldom show it in receiving a guest at home; and our hero soon found himself conversing with great fluency on the business that brought him there.

"I expect that there's no mistake, Mr. Croft, in the fact that you're going to dispose of your interest in the Nixon estate?"

"No mistake at all, sir," replied Mr. Croft: "I came from England on purpose to look after the sale myself."

"You could not have taken a more prudent step, sir. Depend upon it, there's no trusting to agents—you're sure to be cheated."

"Indeed, sir!—that's giving no good character to your men of business. But it was no fear of that kind that brought me out; I chose to come myself for several reasons: first, I wanted to see your fine country; and next, I was told it would be likely to be serviceable to my daughter, who has not been quite well of late; and lastly, I had nothing else to do, having quite given up business of all kinds."

"Why, sir, with a tolerable good estate in possession, a man didn't ought to think over much of business. But maybe you have a large family to provide for?"

"I can hardly say that, sir: this young lady is my only child."

Whitlaw looked again at Miss Croft, and this time decided that she was even handsomer than Lotte.

"Well, Mr. Croft, I shall be happy, sir, if I can be the means of saving you any trouble; and if you have to deal with me, you will at least be in the hands of an honest man. I have been thinking, sir, that I might like to become the purchaser myself of that bit as you've got to sell."

"It can hardly be called a bit, sir," replied Mr. Croft very quietly, "because the estate is as whole and complete as any property can be. But it is of little consequence what you call it, provided you are disposed to give the value.—May I take the liberty of asking your name, sir?"

"My name is Whitlaw;—Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw. Though but a young man, I have some money at my disposal; and if we can deal, I shall be well content to place it on landed security. Have you at all made up your mind as to what you would take for it, Mr. Croft?"

"The question is a very plain one, Mr. Whitlaw, and I see no reason why it should not receive a plain answer. I am told, sir, that the property at Nixon, including the uncleared as well as the cleared, ought to fetch fifty thousand dollars."

This was at least one-fourth more than Whitlaw had calculated, and he felt rather at a loss how to proceed with a negotiation which he knew was greatly beyond his power to complete, even if assisted by every dollar his father could bring forward. But while one scheme seemed melting away, another was gradually and very pleasantly getting possession of his fancy. Why might he not get Nixon without paying for it at all? Why might he not marry Mr. Croft's ONLY daughter, and ONLY child? If she would but think him as handsome as Mrs. Bobbin did, the thing would be settled at once; for it was impossible to suppose that any Christian man would contradict the will of his only daughter, and she in delicate health too. These thoughts took but a moment in passing through his brain, and the next sufficed to suggest to him that his best chance of pleasing both father and daughter, without setting them together by the ears, about him, was to impress them both with sufficient idea of his wealth and consequence. With this object he again addressed Mr. Croft on the subject of the sale, though in truth he had no more idea of achieving it than his good aunt Eli might have had of becoming the purchaser from the profits of her bacon and her dairy.

"Well, Mr. Croft," said he very civilly, "I am not prepared to say, sir, that you are putting too high a value on the property; but the fact is, that it is considerable more than I looked to hear, and I'm half afraid it may pass my means. You see, sir, the fact is, that my father, Mr. Jonathan Whitlaw, of Mount Etna——"

"Mount Etna!" softly exclaimed the beautiful Selina.

These were the first words she had spoken, and they immediately riveted the attention of the admiring Whitlaw. "Did you speak, miss?" said he very respectfully.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for having broken in upon your conversation by my foolish exclamation,—it really was involuntary. But it seemed so strange to hear any person spoken of as being of MOUNT ETNA."

"Such names are by no means out of the common way in this country, Selina," said her father rather reproachfully. "Pray, Mr. Whittlaw, go on."

"Well, sir, as I was saying, my father is a gentleman in possession of a pretty considerable handsome estate, called Mount Etna, which seems to amuse this charming young lady so much. Now, sir, when a gentleman has got a landed estate, it stands to reason that he is not likely to have at the same time such a deal of the ready as would be called for to make good this purchase. Nevertheless, I expect that between us we could come pretty nigh upon it,—and maybe you wouldn't altogether dislike to have a portion of the purchase-money left on mortgage?"

"I am sorry to say, sir," replied Mr. Croft, "that I could not agree to that. My object is to close my accounts with this country altogether. I have no reason whatever to complain of my tenant at Nixon; but I have nevertheless found it very inconvenient to hold property at such a distance."

"I expect that's possible. And this charming young lady, what does she think of our fine country, Mr. Croft?"

"She likes the warm climate exceedingly; but the country appears rather flat to those who are accustomed to the scenery of England."

It is probable that Mr. Croft thought this as much of civility, time, and conversation, as it was necessary to bestow on a stranger who had made a proposal which he did not mean to accept; for he not only ceased to speak, but began looking over and arranging various bills, receipts, and other papers which lay on the table before him. Young Whittlaw, however, if he understood the hint, felt no inclination to profit by it; but turning from the father to the daughter, he set very seriously to work upon an undertaking every way important to him,—namely, the winning grace and favour in the eyes of the beautiful Miss Croft.

"'Tis an unaccountable fine climate, miss, this of ours, that's a fact; and the country isn't that bad neither, I promise you, if you do but get upon the steam-boats and go far enough. Do you approbate the theatre, Miss Croft? I should be first-rate happy if I might be your beau, now and then, to show you the sights."

Miss Croft was not a young lady of fashion, nor did she affect any fastidious refinement beyond her station, which was that of a very respectable merchant's only child, educated at one of the best schools in Liverpool, of which city her father was a native as well as herself, and beyond which neither her knowledge nor her wishes had carried her. She was not yet seventeen, and her time had hitherto been chiefly occupied by the study of those ornamental accomplishments to which her large fortune gave her a right to aspire. Her reading,

beyond her mere class-books, was almost wholly confined to poetry, for which she had a fondness that approached almost to passion. But, like all very strong feelings, it was nourished in silence; and no one living had the least idea that the pale and gentle Selina secretly worshipped a species of glowing idol that made all earthly things seem tame beside it.

Such being the peculiar tone of the young lady's mind, it is not very extraordinary that Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw failed to produce the effect he desired. Indeed, there was something in his accent, manner, and appearance, though he was unquestionably a handsome man, which was very peculiarly disagreeable to her; and at this proposition of becoming "her beau," and showing her "the sights," she felt something extremely like a shudder creep over her, and looking appealingly at her father, she too had recourse to some papers lying on the music-desk that stood before her, and answered not a word.

It is possible that the lovely blush which dyed her cheeks as she turned her eyes from the young man to her desk, might have beguiled a less vain person than Whitlaw into thinking that her silence was not unaccompanied by emotion. Nor indeed was it, though of a kind as far removed as possible from any he wished to inspire; but to him it seemed a most "gracious silence," and with a smile which, if she had seen it would have been if possible more distasteful than his words, he turned from her after a long unbridled gaze, and said to her father as he rose to go,

"I expect, Mr. Croft, that I shall have to see you, sir, on business quite of a private nature before I leave the city."

"Sir!" responded Mr. Croft in a tone of the most unaffected surprise.

"I calculate, sir, that we must contrive to do business together somehow before we part, and I don't count upon your finding my proposals altogether unworthy attention. I've great expectations, Mr. Croft, from more quarters than one, but I'll say no more for the present. Good day to you, sir. Miss Selina Croft, ma'am, I have the honour of wishing you a very good day."

The daughter bowed, the father rang the bell, and Mr. Whitlaw departed.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WE will not follow our presumptuous hero through the various blunders and vanities which in the course of a few days induced him

to ask the hand of Miss Croft in marriage; it will be sufficient to transcribe the letter by which the offer was made, in order to show the grounds on which he founded his hopes of success. The epistle ran thus :

“ TO MR. CROFT, MERCHANT OF LIVERPOOL.

“ MR. CROFT,

“ Sir,—I guess that by this, your dreadful beautiful daughter as well as yourself must be come to a pretty considerable good notion of what I am after. The estate at Nixon is all very well, and I wouldn't have any objection to buy it; and as to the price, I find there'd be no manner of difficulty about finding the needful. Mount Etna is a profitable bit too. But after all, Mr. Croft, what is either estate in consequence compared to the real business in hand between us? I expect I must explain myself, because 'tis in rule so to do; though I don't doubt in the least that the beautiful eyes as have made such work with my heart have been clear-sighted enough to spy out what they have done. The short and the long of it is, then, that I'm in love with your daughter, Mr. Croft, and that I hereby make a proposal to marry her. One good reason why this match is likely enough to be agreeable to all parties is, that we are both of us only children; which makes the business, as you will allow, a deal more plain-sailing. For, who could Mr. Whitlaw of Mount Etna be after leaving all his property to?—and he has not that little to make it a flea-bite. And who could you, Mr. Croft, devise yours to—which I don't question is pretty considerable also—except to us two? So that's plain enough. As to the article of residence, I'm a right-down good American, that's a fact: nevertheless, I would be no ways particular as to accompanying my wife to England for a spell; and some of our young family might be left to cheer your old age, Mr. Croft, if you wished it, sir. In short, I take it upon myself to assure you that in all things we shall be ready and willing to do what's most agreeable to you.

“ As to money down, I guess that the best way will be not to meddle or make with the Nixon estate at all, but just let that come straight at once to my wife, which I shall consider like one and the same as ready cash; and I understand that you couldn't be well off doing that, seeing that it comes by the young lady's mother; and ought therefore, as matter of course and justice, to go to her child. There is but one other point, I expect, that need be mentioned at present; but that's one on which I don't think I should be over easy to change, and therefore it ought by rights to be done settled at first starting. Whenever my wife and I goes over to the old country, I never will suffer nor permit any of my niggers to go across with us, for I know from good authority what comes of it: they gets free as soon as they touches that queer old place, and devil a bit should I ever get 'em back again to Louisiana. Not doubting that all I propose will be counted reasonable and handsome,

“ I remain, honoured sir,

“ Your friend and son (as would be)

“ JONATHAN JEFFERSON WHITLAW.

“ P.S. As I don't see any reason for wishing for delay, I shall be ready to perform my part of the happy ceremony at the shortest notice.

“ To Mr. John Croft.”

When this letter was delivered, the father and daughter were, as was very usual with them, sitting together. Mr. Croft read it through without uttering a word, and having finished it, he sighed deeply and began again at "Mr. Croft,—Sir:" but before he had finished the first page, he stopped short, and looking at his daughter with great gentleness, and as if he feared to give her pain, he said,

"Selina? why have you not told me this?—why have you not told me that Mr. Whitlaw was your lover?"

"Who, father!" replied the poor girl almost in a swoon,—“who do you say is my lover?"

"That young man called Whitlaw, Selina. Here is a letter from him—a very strange letter certainly, in every way; but it is evident he considers himself as your accepted lover."

"He!—Oh, father! can you say that and bear me in your sight? He my accepted lover! The only human being—God forgive me!—that I was ever sinful enough to hate."

"My dearest child!" exclaimed her father in a voice that testified the most unequivocal satisfaction, "forgive me for having for a single instant believed it possible. But see how he writes, Selina! The presumptuous fool!—What could I think, my dear girl, from such a letter as this?"

Selina received the letter and read it. Her father watched her countenance as she proceeded, and was surprised at the violent agitation it betrayed. From the moment he discovered that the tone of confident success assumed in this curious epistle was as unwarranted as it was displeasing, he felt greatly inclined to indulge in the ridicule it so naturally excited; but the emotion of his daughter forbade this, and he felt almost ashamed of having been disposed to treat lightly what evidently occasioned her much real suffering.

"Give me the letter, Selina,—it is really beneath your notice. Pray compose yourself and think no more of this presumptuous youth: never surely was any man so besotted by his vanity as this one!"

"I am very wrong, I believe, to be so deeply wounded by it. Is it pride, father, that makes my heart swell as if it would choke me when I think of this man's fancying I could marry him?"

"Perhaps it may be, my love; and yet I think there are better feelings too that may have a part in it. This letter is offensive to your delicacy, Selina, as well as to your pride. But come, come, do not look so very like a duchess about it. I will give him his answer, and you shall hear no more of him."

"Pray do not spare him, sir," said the young lady, rising to leave the room. "I particularly request that you will let him understand that we had neither of us any 'notion at all of what he was after.'

These, I think, are his own elegant words, and he will probably understand them better than any other you could use."

Miss Croft retired to her own little dressing-room, where, as usual, though she was there only as a sojourner in the land, her lofty and romantic spirit had surrounded itself with the only food it loved to feed upon. A volume of Spenser was in her hand, and she was completely absorbed by the noble thoughts she found there, when her English maid entered and informed her that a poor old negro-woman desired to speak to her.

It was with the deep sigh with which one resigns an occupation that is very dear, for one that is not so, that the young enthusiast laid aside the cherished volume, and meekly said, "Let her come in."

Selina's was a kind and generous heart; and feeling no doubt that the poor old negro-woman described by her maid came to ask charity, she could not hesitate to receive her. But had she been engaged in an occupation less delightful than that of reading Spenser, this interruption would still have been distasteful to her. The oppressed and suffering condition of the coloured people at New Orleans was a source of constant annoyance to her comfort; yet she had a fanciful theory of her own respecting them, which, though it never could have led her generous and gentle temper to treat them harshly, made all intercourse with them in some degree painful and degrading. She firmly believed that this marked and hitherto most unhappy race were the descendants of Cain, and her feelings towards them were the result of both superstitious abhorrence and wounded compassion.

It was not, therefore, without a sort of mental struggle that she did, as we have seen, desire the old negro-woman to "come in."

It was the uncouth and decrepit figure of Juno that met her eyes as she raised them on her maid's re-entering with the announcement—"Here is the old woman, ma'am."

Selina started. Though less wild and grotesque in appearance than when she sought to excite respect by the assumption of supernatural power, the aspect of Juno was still sufficiently singular to produce surprise at least, if not disgust and terror. Perhaps in the feelings of Selina there was a mixture of all three.

She recovered herself, however, and said very kindly, "Can I do anything to serve you, my good woman?"

"Music!" exclaimed Juno, fixing her eyes with impassioned earnestness on her face,— "most sweet music!"

"What can she mean, Susan?" said the young lady, turning to her maid, who, with a look half frightened, half laughing, stood gazing on the odd-looking stranger: "do you suppose she wants me to play to her?"

"Oh dear, no, ma'am; she never could think of such a thing. What do you want, old woman?"

"I want not you, young woman," replied Juno with somewhat of her usual authority of tone; "I want only to see and hear that angel."

Juno as she spoke advanced a few steps towards the object of her admiration, and gazing fixedly and wistfully in her face, large heavy tears fell drop by drop unconsciously from her eyes, and she seemed wholly to forget where she was, and the surprise she was likely to excite.

Agitated and displeased, Selina sought to shrink from her glance, and moving to a greater distance, said, "I think you must mistake me for some one else, good woman: pray do not stare at me so. Give her this, Susan, and take her down stairs: if she wishes for anything to eat, let her have it."

The abigail took some money from the hand of her mistress, and offered it to the old woman.

"You are white, and no slave, young woman,—I know that well, and respect you accordingly; but I would not have you here at this moment,—it is a very awful one. Keep the money,—I have no need of it; you work for hire, and let that pay you for the trouble of leaving the room for a few minutes."

The girl looked half frightened, and seemed about to obey her, when Selina cried out eagerly, "Do not go, Susan—I will not have you leave me."

"Selina!" exclaimed Juno in a tone of tender reproach; Selina!—child of Selina, as she was of my Selina, my own, my lovely one!—do you fear me? Let that woman go, Selina—it were better for us both—no, no, it were better for you, Selina, that she should not hear what I must now disclose: will you send her from us?"

"Surely she is mad, Susan," cried the poor girl, greatly terrified; "you must not—indeed you must not leave me."

The whole expression of Juno's countenance changed as she listened to these words, and instead of tenderness, anger and despair seemed almost to convulse her features.

"No, girl, I am not mad, but I am black; and I am still a slave,—ay; still a slave, as when I gave birth to her who gave birth to your mother. You tremble, Selina—you turn deadly pale!—Alas! poor child! it was but cruel fondness to tell thee this; yet it is true, Selina: but this menial here should not have heard it. Tell her, my child,—my poor, pale, trembling child,—that she must not publish to the world, not to the New Orleans world, that thou hast a living parent in a poor old slave. Selina, dearest!—will you not speak to me?—you are my child, the offspring of my blood, as surely as of the white man's who had my early woman's love—my first, my last, my only love. Selina! will you not speak to your old parent?"

"Oh, dreadful! dreadful!" shrieked the terrified Selina. "Where is my father?—Father! father! come to me!"

Susan; who had listened with equal attention and astonishment to this strange disclosure, and who found there was no more news to be learned by remaining in the room, thought that the best thing she could do in order to satisfy her mistress's doubts and her own, would be to gratify the young lady by summoning her father. She accordingly almost threw herself down the staircase which led to the room he occupied, and bursting open the door, she exclaimed, "For God's sake, sir, come this instant to my young lady, or you will hardly find her alive!"

Mr. Croft, who had just despatched his letter to Whitlaw, which a feeling of anger at the painful emotion he had caused his daughter had led him to write with some severity, now fancied that the illness her maid announced proceed from the same source, and that she was fretting at the insult she had received.

"Poor girl!—poor dear girl!—it is too bad, a great deal too bad;—but, hang the fellow! I think it will be long enough before he ventures upon a similar experiment." It was thus Mr. Croft muttered forth his resentment as he hastily followed Susan to his daughter's apartment. Great indeed was his astonishment at seeing her lying back in her chair almost insensible, while old Juno with mixed anger and alarm stood at a short distance from her, alternately uttering words of tenderest affection, and expressions of bitter reproach.

"Good God! what is the matter, my child! Who is this woman? Why are you looking so pale and so terrified?"

The voice of her father seemed to restore her faculties; she started up, and throwing herself into his arms, exclaimed, "Oh, father! father! tell me it is false!—tell me, swear to me, that I am not of the accursed race of Cain!"

"My dear Selina, what can have happened to put you into this dreadful agitation? Who is this old woman? and what has she been saying to you?"

"The old woman will tell you all you wish to know, if you are the father of Selina!" said Juno. "But let not that young woman, whose eyes look more curious than kind—let her not remain to hear it. She has already heard enough to puzzle her; and I have no wish that the matter should be made clearer to her understanding."

"Go, Susan," said Mr. Croft, more than ever bewildered; and replacing his daughter on her chair, he sat down beside her, prepared to hear some fortune-telling tale of dismal augury, and exceedingly well disposed to throw the speaker of it out of the window when it was done.

Susan retreated, and shut the door behind her; but Juno knew little

of the nature of white waiting-maids, when she imagined that by sending her from the room because there was something going forward which she was not to know, she would thereby be kept ignorant of it. The door had a keyhole, and to that keyhole was applied Susan's ear.

No sooner was she out of sight than Juno again spoke.

"It is woe and grief to me to have shaken the spirit of that lovely child; but nature cried aloud within me. She is mine—my child in the third descent; could I look at, and not claim her? But that claim seems to have broken her heart."

"What on earth do you mean, woman?" said Mr. Croft sternly; "what raving nonsense is this? Selina, my love, look up; you surely cannot for a moment believe this wild and most improbable story!"

The unfortunate Selina however did believe it, though struggling hard to doubt it.

"Will you be pleased, sir," said Juno, "to answer me one or two questions? My questions may enlighten you more than your answers can enlighten me."

"What is it you would ask, woman?" said Mr. Croft: "be quick, and let us have an end to this mummerly."

"Was not your wife's maiden name Woodthorpe?—Selina Woodthorpe?"

"Well! and what then?"

"Did you ever hear her mother's maiden name? Was it not Seldon—Selina too,—Selina Seldon?"

"Yes, I know that was her name. I have several books belonging to her; and her name was written in them all."

"That Selina Seldon, the mother of your wife, was my child. She was a yellow woman, and, as they say, a very lovely one. You look strangely at me; but my tale is a true one, and those by whose means I have ever been enabled to hear tidings of the only race on earth with whom I claim kindred—they can tell you so, and will, if you'll be pleased to ask them."

The manner of Juno was now so perfectly calm and rational, that there was no longer any possibility of believing her insane; but Mr. Croft, as he looked in the face of his daughter, trembled at the consequences this strange disclosure was likely to make upon her. Whatever he had thought of the old woman at first, he was now greatly persuaded that the story was a true one; he well remembered the beautiful but dark olive of his wife's complexion, her raven hair, and the peculiar clearness of her large black eyes; but to him the conviction brought nothing terrible. His wife had been a very beautiful, accomplished, and estimable woman; had brought him a handsome

fortune, and died regretted by a large circle of friends. Of what nation, country, or colour her mother or her mother's mother might have been, was to him a matter of great indifference; though assuredly, had he known her origin, he would not have brought his daughter to New Orleans. All he could now do, however, was to calm the evident agony of poor Selina's mind by endeavouring to throw doubt upon the statement of the old woman, which in fact was as yet quite unproved.

"Selina!" said he, "this story is far too wild and fanciful to be received as true upon any single testimony whatever. I will inquire into it. Should it prove as idle as it is likely to do, I trust you will dismiss it instantly and entirely from your thoughts. If, on the contrary, it should be borne out by testimony, our course is very simple: I will immediately purchase the freedom of this poor slave, leave her with ample means to pass her remaining days in comfort, and then return to our own country, where this very romantic history will never be known or believed. Will not this satisfy you, my dear child?"

"Father! you do not yet believe it?"

"No, no, Selina! It is much too improbable."

"Thank God! But if it be false, father, it is because that poor wretch is mad. She believes the tale herself, I am sure of it."

"Poor child!" said Juno sadly; "does it cut so deeply? I would I had never told it! Farewell, Selina! Your name has been poor Juno's talisman for many a year; it served to conjure off much shame and sorrow from her. But she shall never talk of it again—not even to the woods. Farewell!"

She waited not for any answer, but hastily retreated from the room. As she passed through the door, she perceived a female figure gliding rapidly down the stairs before it, and she thought it was that of the white waiting-maid whose presence had so much annoyed her. But Juno's heart was too heavy at this moment to pay much attention to trifles, and she thought no more of it. All the bright but uncertain hopes with which she had entered the house were now crushed and dead; but perhaps the pang that rankled most painfully was the suspicion expressed by the father that she was an impostor. Her head was aching and giddy with the numberless projects that suggested themselves for proving with immediate and most imposing evidence the truth of her assertions, but the remembrance of Selina's pale and wretched face chased them all. She determined therefore to see Mr. Croft alone on the morrow, for the purpose of showing him one or two memorials which she thought must bring conviction to his mind; and then," thought poor Juno,—“then I will once more turn my back upon New Orleans—creep into the hut these hands have built, and die!”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MR. CROFT's letter of dismissal to Whitlaw was not penned without some slight touch of the contempt and indignation his impudent assumption of success deserved; but it produced a degree of irritation on the mind of the young man more proportioned to his preposterous estimate of his own merits than to the degree of severity with which it was written.

The nation of Mr. Croft came in for no inconsiderable portion of the maledictions which followed the perusal of it. In fact, it was less wounding to his vanity to believe that he was dismissed because a d—d infernal proud Englishman would not suffer his daughter to marry an American, than that his personal qualities were not such as to make him acceptable to the young lady herself.

A very malignant feeling of jealousy, however, mixed with his disappointment. Perhaps, he really believed that no young girl, not prepossessed in favour of another, could have resisted him; and as if the Spanish feelings which had once been the soul of New Orleans still haunted its precincts and now visited him, visions of daggers, knives and stilettos seemed to float before his eyes and arrange themselves in his brain. Before he could indulge himself, however, with even fancying how they might avenge him, it was necessary to ascertain who the individual might be for whose especial service he was willing to employ them. There was some very savage ingredient, as it should seem, in the passion of love whenever it found its way into the bosom of Whitlaw. Though long celebrated for his licentious amours, Lotte Steinmark was decidedly the first female whose beauty had really touched the heart of my hero; and to her brothers, who had seemed to stand round and guard her from him, he had vowed, and still held himself ready to perform the vow whenever occasion might offer, a vengeance not the less deep because delayed.

Selina Croft, if she had not effaced this first impression, had decidedly made a new one beside it; but in her case also, the tender feeling was soon merged and lost in sentiments of mortification and hatred.

During the few days which intervened between Whitlaw's first visit to Mr. Croft and the delivery of the letter which brought his hopes to so abrupt a conclusion, he had more than once called, and been refused admittance. But, quite persuaded that this was the consequence of a general, and not particular exclusion, he conceived the idea that

the gallant and well-trying project of bribing the lady's maid with a little love and a little money might avail him.

The scheme was quite successful. Susan had left her own country chiefly in the hope of finding profit and adventure; and when, therefore, she saw herself dodged in one of the streets of New Orleans by a very tall and handsome *gentleman* (Whitlaw was always well dressed), she saw no harm in looking over her shoulder to see what he could possibly mean, or at length in listening to him while he declared that if her mistress were as handsome as herself, he would contrive to marry her, if her fortune were one half less; but that, as it was, she should be rewarded by his purse, as well as his tenderest admiration, if she would assist in bringing him within reach of Miss Croft.

Between such persons as Mr. Whitlaw and Susan, these sort of compacts do not take long in arranging; and it was soon agreed, that when he rang, which he was to do with peculiar gentleness, she should pass near the door by accident, open it, and admit him:

This had been done repeatedly; and it was the angry blush which melted on Selina's cheek, and a half smile that showed itself in the good-humoured dimples of her father upon these occasions, which, being read amiss, had led to the *éclaircissement*. It was not one interview, however, which had sufficed to arrange these visits, or to reward Susan for her successful management of them. At a certain hour in each day, the young woman had repaired to a place indicated; and Whitlaw, who was now as anxious to examine her respecting others as he had been to interest her for himself, again kept the appointment, and again had the satisfaction of finding his agent faithful to it.

He immediately perceived that the girl had something new and important to communicate, and after the prologue of a few gentle words on both sides, they prepared mutually to open their hearts, and relieve themselves of the load of intelligence that oppressed them.

"I have got news for you, now, Mr. Whitlaw," said Susan; "but I misdoubt if you will like it much—at least if you hold fast to your intention of marrying my young lady. What blood do you think she's come of, Mr. Whitlaw?—and she so pale and delicate too!"

"What blood?" repeated Whitlaw. "Why, d—d English blood, I suppose. What d'ye mean, my dear?"

"I mean almost more than you will believe, I think; and yet, it is as true as that you're tall and I'm short. I mean, Mr. Whitlaw, that Miss Croft's mother came of a nigger."

"Not possible!"

"'Tis true though, as sure as you stand there. I saw the old negress myself, as came to claim the relationship; and an ugly old monster she is as ever my eyes looked upon. Do you think, Mr. Whitlaw, that there will be any danger of the likeness coming upon the children over

again? I have heard tell that it does sometimes happen with the gout, and with red hair, and fits, and a great many things; but I'm sure I should be sorry to see a lawful-born child of yours look like a nigger;—that *would* be a pity!"

"Black blood!" muttered Whitlaw, who seemed hardly conscious that he spoke.

"Yes, sir, black blood! God knows, there is no good in mincing the matter; for the cretur is as black as your boot."

"Black blood, Susan? Is it true? are you very, very sure there is no mistake? You darling, beautiful creature! I will doat upon you for ever for this. But, Susan, I must see her once more—only once; you need not be jealous, my dear, but I must positively see her once again, and without her father too. How can you manage this?"

"Easy enough, Mr. Whitlaw, if you can come to-morrow afternoon. My master has a party of three or four gentlemen to dine with him. Miss Croft never dines at table on these occasions, but is always dressed and ready to receive them in the drawing-room afterwards. Now, your time will be to come just before sunset, and then you'll be sure of her."

"Good! To-morrow, before sun-down, I'll be there, Susan, if I never make another visit on earth. But remember, you are at hand, dear girl! Once you failed me—last Monday, you know, and I was sent off. If you fail me to-morrow, Susan, I will never see you more."

"Don't be afraid, Mr. Whitlaw. I'll come down straight from dressing her, and bide at the front door looking about me till you come; so there'll be no need of knocking or ringing at all."

"Excellent! And now good-b'ye, dear Susan! I must reserve all I had to say to you till next time—I have a hundred things to think of. Good-b'ye."

And so they parted;—Susan to return with eye of lynx to spy into the sick heart of her young mistress; and Whitlaw, to enjoy the prospect of a revenge more admirably suited to his wishes, than any his own ingenious faculties could have conceived.

For many hours he meditated upon it with a fulness of delight which left no room for thoughts of mere human wisdom and policy; but at length it occurred to him, that if he managed well, he might first gratify his longing to revenge the affront he had received, and then turn the discovery to handsome profit. So delightful were these speculations, that not even the gaming-table had stimulant sufficient to occupy him during this interval, and he passed the moments in anxious but not unhappy idleness till the hour of appointment arrived.

True to her promise, Susan stood gaily dressed at the door; and as she made way for Whitlaw to pass, she whispered, "There she is all

alone, and dismal enough, I promise you, since she found out her black nigger grandmother."

Whitlaw bounded up the stairs like the squirrel of his native woods : he feared lest the father of the young creature whose feelings he was going to outrage might start forth and stop him.

Without giving the slightest signal of his approach, Whitlaw opened the door and entered.

Selina was sitting near a table on which lay an open volume ; but her head rested upon a fair hand which entirely covered her eyes, and it was evident that she was not reading. The opening door roused her : she looked up and saw Whitlaw.

As usual, her heightened colour proclaimed some species of emotion ; but it was not now, as formerly, mistaken for the blush of love, albeit that it was "celestial, rosy red." She rose from her seat, and her eyes said as plainly as eyes could speak,

"How dare you enter here?"

"Don't disturb yourself, Miss Selina," said Whitlaw, with a degree of effrontery that very literally struck her dumb. "Sit still," he continued : "a pretty girl, if she's as yellow as a guinea, may always sit, provided there's nobody by but the man—that's her lover."

He approached very near her as he spoke, and a feeling of deep disgust made her spring aside as if some noxious reptile was coming upon her.

"Well, now, if I don't believe that you're afraid of me! Why, that's instinct, my pretty girl. You know, I expect, that black blood is black blood, let it be filtered down ever so ; and maybe you think I'm come to treat you as coloured folks is always treated in this country when they don't know how to behave themselves? A pretty game you've been after playing, you and your father, haven't you? But near as I was to be taken in, I don't bear malice ; and besides, my dear, if you had done caught me, our marriage, you know, would have been just no marriage at all ; for the law says, that if a white man de-means himself to marry one of a coloured race, it's just all one as if they wasn't married at all. But I'm a faithful lover, my pretty miss, and to let you down gentle like, I'm willing, if you behaves yourself, to make you my favourite mistress after all."

Choking with mingled sensations of shame and indignation, the unhappy Selina could only articulate, "Go!—go!—go!"

"Go? When you've been a little longer in this country, you'll know your place better, my dear. I don't mean to go, little lady, till I've proved that a friend in need is a friend indeed. Instead of going, I will just place myself here, Miss Selina ; and you may sit down too, if you will—I shan't object."

A dreadful sensation of sickness that made her fear she was fainting

obliged her to obey him, for in truth it rendered her totally incapable of escape.

"My!" exclaimed her tormenter, "you do look pale enough now for one of negro breed, that's a fact. I expect you'll be all the better for a glass of water, my dear."

So saying, he rose and rang the bell. A female slave answered it.

"Bring a glass of water here, blacky," said Whitlaw, pointing to Selina to show her for whom it was required. The girl left the room; and returning instantly, poured out a glass of water with anxious haste, and presented it to her almost fainting mistress. Selina took it eagerly, and used the strength it gave her in rising to leave the room.

"No, no, my girl, you must not go yet," said the wretch, putting himself in a truly national attitude, balancing himself on one chair and throwing a leg over the back of another, while the trembling and wholly subdued Selina stood before him. "I've got to tell you that for a handsome consideration—a neat bit out of the Nixon estate, perhaps—Go out of the room, smut!" he cried, stopping short in his proposals, and addressing the negress, who stared at him with astonishment and dislike, but, obedient to the white man's word, she immediately left the room. "There now," he continued, "see if I arn't honourable!—Maybe she's your cousin, though.—But what I say must be between ourselves, my dear, or it won't be worth hearing. What I was going to propose was this, that your father should make over to me a part, you see, of the Nixon estate, upon condition, signed and sealed, if you will, that I keep the secret of your being come of negro blood; and then, maybe, I'll be so civil as to be still willing to buy the remainder ;'cause you see you couldn't inherit it in this country, my dear :—not to mention that you'd be turned out neck and heels of every room where you put your foot, unless 'tis to wait upon us white, or the like of that. But if you'll consent to this proposal, I'll undertake to get you smuggled out of the country before it gets wind at all,—that is, provided you wouldn't like better to stay in it as my favourite miss."

A deep groan was the only answer he received, and at the same moment Selina fell prostrate on the ground.

Mr. Whitlaw thought it was now time to escape, and he did so, after turning one every fiendish glance of triumph upon the unconscious girl; determined however, to repeat his kind proposal to her father in writing, which, whether it were received as an insult or a bargain, would be almost equally satisfactory to him.

When Selina recovered her senses, she found herself on her bed, with her room darkened and all the *appareil* of invalidism about her. She felt little or no weakness of body, however, and her first impulse

led her to rise, in order to seek her father; but she recollected that he was not alone, and quickly replacing her head on the pillow, and bidding her maid return to tell her when his guests were departed, she determined to pass the interval in meditating on her own strange and greatly altered situation.

Had the disclosure which so overwhelmed her been made in any other country, its effect upon her mind would have been totally different. In England it is probable that such an incredible statement would have been treated only as a jest. Very lovely portraits of the two females through whom the detested stain had reached her were among the boasted treasures of her inheritance, and the early death of both had probably contributed to the utter oblivion of their female ancestor. Mr. Croft, in marrying the only daughter and heiress of a respectable London merchant, had not deemed it necessary to inquire into the lineage of her mother, who survived her birth but a few hours; especially as it was well known that the property he received with her was from this mother's fortune, which had luckily been settled on her child at her marriage, the father afterwards becoming bankrupt.

Selina's education, though sedulously attended to on some points, had given her very little general information; and the impressions she received on most subjects were more influenced by her own high-wrought imagination, than by any previous knowledge acquired from good authority. The appearance and condition of the slave population as they met her at New Orleans was equally unexpected and revolting: she knew little or nothing on the subject of their history or their wrongs, and her deeply-religious spirit was shocked to feel a sort of impious misdoubting of the justice of Heaven, as their degraded and terrible position was developed before her. From this most painful and guilty thought she was relieved by the persuasion which soon took possession of her mind, that this dreadful spectacle was the result of the immutable command of God. "Well might wretched Cain say," exclaimed she, as she turned with loathing from the objects which perpetually met her eyes,—“well might he say prophetically for his whole race, ‘My punishment is greater than I can bear!’”

With opinions and feelings such as these, the state of her mind at suddenly finding herself branded as one still stained by the accursed “**MARK**” may in some degree be conceived. In common with most young people of a fanciful temperament and poetical turn of thought, she conceived herself somewhat apart from and above the common herd. Neither her fortune nor her beauty created any such feeling, but she had believed herself favoured by Heaven with a soul of higher tone than was usually accorded to mortals. Poor girl!—the descent from these visions to the hateful reality was too violent.

For two long hours she lay ruminating on her past and present lot before her father came to her.

With all his earnest wishes to heal the wound her mind had received, he was unable to utter a word that could give her consolation. Mr. Croft was a true-hearted and truth-speaking Englishman. In such a cause he might perhaps have wished to deceive; but he knew not how to do it. All the inquiries he had made by means of the clue furnished him by Juno, who had delivered many letters and memoranda into his hands, had tended to convince him that her statement was true, and he now came to announce to his daughter the only news he thought likely to console her; namely, that he had determined upon sailing for Europe by the first vessel that left the port with that destination.

Selina had risen from her bed before his entrance, her maid having announced the departure of his guests; and she met him with such an appearance of restored composure, that half his uneasiness vanished, and he spoke cheerfully of their speedy departure.

His daughter listened to him with a quiet smile, but seemed to evade the subject, as if not yet sufficiently restored to enter upon it.

"To-morrow, dear father," said she,—“to-morrow settle all about it. I will come down and take a biscuit and a glass of wine with you, and then I will go to rest.”

Perfectly satisfied by the composure of her manner, and anxious, late as it was for business, to go out immediately in the hope of finding one or two persons whom it was necessary he should see before his departure, he led her to the parlour which they usually occupied in the morning, and having ordered and partaken with her the refreshment she desired, prepared to leave her, saying, “Good night, dear love! it is not yet too late for me to do several things which will save time to-morrow.”

Selina rose and approached him. “Give me your blessing and a kiss, dear father!” she said, resting her head upon his bosom.

“God bless thee, my sweet child!” he replied, pressing her fair forehead with his lips,—“God bless thee, dearest!”

“She withdrew gently from his embrace, and sat down without speaking. He looked at her fondly for a moment, repeated his “God bless you, dearest!” and withdrew.

The room she was in opened upon the garden. She drew back the curtain, and seeing the bright moonlight reflected by a thousand beautiful blossoms, she walked out into the midst of them. Nothing could be more delicious than the feel and the fragrance of the air at that hour. The day had been oppressively warm, but now a breeze played among the myrtles, the oranges, and the tuberose, which, to a tamer fancy than Selina's, might have recalled the gales of Eden. She removed the comb and ribbon which confined her hair, and giving her

long coal-black tresses to the wind, seemed to enjoy the freedom with which they fanned her cheek. She stood thus for many minutes inhaling the rich odour of the shrubs with a feeling that seemed to approach to ecstasy.

At length the spell was broken, and she moved on ; but her step and action were hurried and unquiet. She went from tree to tree plucking the flowers, till she had collected almost more than she could carry ; and then retreating hastily to the house, she regained her chamber, dismissed her maid, who was in attendance there, and carefully securing her door, remained alone.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

It will be necessary that I should again lose sight of my hero for a short time, that the reader may be enabled to understand the position of those whom accident had made of importance to his future destiny.

After quitting the mansion of Frederick Steinmark, Juno lost no time in letting Colonel Dart understand that it was necessary he should forthwith, for his own especial well-being and safety, despatch a civil epistle to the German proprietor of Reichland, assuring him that if he stood in need of an excellent gardener, the best thing he could do would be to purchase a slave known by the name of Cæsar Bush from the factory of Mr. Oglevie, near New Orleans.

Colonel Dart had done so many things of greater importance at the bidding of Juno, that it was not very likely she should find much trouble in obtaining his compliance with this new behest ; nor, in fact did she, though the little gentleman did look rather more puzzled than usual at the request.

“ But what the devil is it to me, Juno, who that German idiot that works his grounds with white men has for a gardener ? Why for shouldn't he go on as he began, without owning a slave ? He'll be sure to get ruined at last, and it isn't I that have any right to stop him.”

“ I well know that it is not for the master of all,” replied Juno, “ to trouble himself with the concerns of any such mean, ignorant, foreign whites as the people at Reichland : but neither have the people at Reichland, in good truth, anything to do with this matter, excepting as we have the wit to make them act and do for the furtherance of the affairs of others. It is needful for the safety of Paradise Plantation, and for the more precious safety still of him who is the master of it, that

this young slave Cæsar, who will act faithfully by my orders, should be stationed near us. This is all ; and the man called Frederick Steinmark is only to be a tool in our hands."

Juno pronounced this harangue in an accent of such assured authority, that the colonel never for an instant conceived the possibility of refusing to do what she desired ; and the letter was accordingly written in very precise conformity to her instructions, and forthwith delivered into her hands.

Furnished with this document, she sought and found Edward Bligh, who had suffered much in mind since the dangerous hours passed in Karl Steinmark's strawberry-field. Though the gossip so confidently repeated at Mount Etna respecting the marriage of Lotte with the young baron was certainly premature, there was already enough of love between them to "show the eyes and grieve the heart" of poor Edward, and to convince him with dreadful torturing certainty that woman's love, that drop of redeeming sweetness that seems thrown by Providence into the bitter cup of human life to render it bearable to those doomed to quaff it, would never be distilled into his.

Two subsequent visits, made with trembling hope and sickening fear, had fully convinced him of this ; but with the gentle resignation and high courage of his noble nature, he saw in it only a new proof that it was Heaven's will he should not bind his affections to anything on earth, but hold himself prepared to sacrifice a life, perhaps mercifully made of little value, whenever the duty to which he had devoted himself should demand his doing so.

Poor Edward !—if the enthusiasm which a worldly scoffer would have called his hobby-horse did indeed lead him astray to a degree that indicated a mind diseased, it was a malady which, like the redundant blossom often seen to burst the calix that should retain it, manifested a richness and perfection only too powerful for nature to sustain.

When Juno reached his forest home, she found him sitting with his Bible open on his little table ; but his eye at that moment was not perusing the page spread out before him, but rested as it were on vacancy, with that fixed gaze in which the soul seems to look out farther than the bodily organ can follow it.

Old Juno was no favourite with Edward ; and had not the vehement feelings recently excited, and so quickly checked, left him in a state of such subdued and melancholy gentleness as made him feel it only a fulfilment of his destiny to bear and forbear with all persons, and in all circumstances to which he might be exposed, it is probable that the errand she came to send him on, might not have been so meekly accepted as it was.

"I see not well how this letter can be likely to benefit Cæsar, my

good woman; but I will deliver it to Mr. Steinmark, as you are so earnest with me to do so."

"The blessing of Heaven need not be invoked by such as I am, on such as you are," replied Juno, "or I would kneel down now to ask for it; but, Master Edward, though you have no faith in Juno, you will do, even at her bidding, what will make poor Cæsar the safe property of this good and righteous foreigner, instead of leaving him in hourly risk of again becoming the prey of a creole slave-driver. Say!—will you not?"

"I will indeed, Juno, if I have the power to do it. But it is contrary to the principles of Frederick Steinmark to purchase a slave—why therefore should you suppose that he would do it now?"

"The principles of Frederick Steinmark," answered Juno, "will never restrain him from doing a good action, however much the manner of it may be foreign to the habits of his life. By redeeming this poor runaway from the peril that hangs over him, the good Frederick Steinmark will not become the thing he abominates—a dealer in human flesh, an impious trampler on the image of God—in one single unholy word, a slave-holder: were he to purchase the whole race, Frederick Steinmark would not be this. It is not, Master Edward, the having possession of a morsel of written paper, which by the wicked laws of this sinful country is made to give one man a right to rob another of all that God bestowed upon him at his birth,—it is not holding this harmless paper, Master Edward, that can turn a good man into that accursed thing, a slave-holder. Even in this land of white man's sin and black man's suffering—even in Louisiana, there are some who have purchased a right to protect the negroes who willingly, joyfully, and gratefully work for them—for they are kindly treated. If Frederick Steinmark were a man to doubt that this is possible, I would bid him turn his benevolent eyes, that seem to shed kindness upon all men,—I would bid him turn those gentle reasoning eyes to the Red River; let him look into a wide-spread farm at Alexandria,* and he would see that a good man, living in the bosom of his family, may render labour light and servitude a blessing by ruling with a gentle hand and kind heart the race who are doomed to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. This sight, if he have any scruples as to the righteousness of purchasing Cæsar, may remove them. But your word, Master Edward, might perhaps do more still towards leading him to do this great good—and will you not speak it?"

* The family of Mr. F*** I are living at this spot in a manner that shows, even by the happiness they shed around them, how little individual goodness can do, beyond its own immediate sphere, towards neutralizing the poison of laws which permit the institution of slavery to exist. Is there a single negro besides those whom he has given himself a right to protect, who are the better for the Christian philosophy of this excellent man?

Edward listened to the whole of this long speech with the most patient attention, and then said,

"You are right in believing that Mr. Steinmark would not necessarily become sinful by obtaining such possession of a slave as the laws of the country have power to give; and I have little doubt that with such an object before him as the rescuing poor Cæsar, he would conquer the repugnance he feels to such a transaction. But I do not comprehend, Juno, how this letter so strangely obtained by you from your master, nor how my advice to him that he should act upon it, can render it possible for him to negotiate the purchase of a runaway slave. You know, Juno, that I do not love tricks and mystery."

Old Juno shook her head, and remained for a minute or two quite silent. Had any other so spoken to her, it is probable that her anger and indignation would have been pronounced in no measured terms; but her respect for Edward Bligh was most profound, and her love and reverence for all the sacrifices of safety and of peace which he was making for the unhappy people to whom she belonged, invested him with a sort of sacred authority in her eyes, which rendered it impossible that she should express anger for anything he could say.

Having subdued the feelings that might have led to disrespectful words, she replied with the utmost deference, "Alas, Master Edward!—how is such a one as I am to work out a good deed amongst the men we have got to deal with, except by tricks and seeming mystery?—Do you think, young gentleman, that if I were to go to Colonel Dart, or to Mr. Oglevie, and tell them the truth and no more, that all the dollars the good German has honestly won from our rich soil would induce either of them to resign Cæsar to his keeping?—Ah, Master Edward! you know them better than to believe it."

"You are right—you are right, and perhaps I have been unjust to you, Juno," replied Edward kindly, and feeling indeed that she spoke the truth: "I will take this letter to Mr. Steinmark, and will trust to your using such means as you have to make his interference effectual.—Farewell."

Juno watched him depart towards Reichland, rejoicing that she had found words to lead him to perform her will, which she certainly knew was a very honest one in this instance at least; but spite of the gladness and even of the triumph that cheered her, a tear dimmed her eye as she looked after him.

"Too good for earth—too fit for heaven to bide long with us," she muttered as she turned her steps homeward; and she pondered upon his probable destiny, till she herself almost doubted whether the dark future that seemed to open before her eyes were simply the effect of conjecture, or of a revealing of that which was to come, such as was not given to the minds of others.

The old woman reached her hut weary and exhausted ; but the sight of Cæsar's ecstasy at her probable success, as she sat beside the grave-like apartment he occupied and recounted all she had done, and all she hoped to-do, acted as a restorative ; and before she slept, she contrived to make the nervous Colonel Dart despatch a letter by the post, to Oglevie of the paper-factory, Cicero-ville, requesting him for very particular reasons to accept the sum of one thousand dollars for Cæsar Bush, which a gentleman in the neighbourhood of Paradise Plantations intended to offer him. The prudent colonel ended his letter, even without the help of Juno, by remarking that he was too well known a disciplinarian for Mr. Oglevie to suspect that he meant to encourage a runaway, but that circumstances made it very desirable that Mr. Steinmark should be obliged in this matter.

Having thus well completed her day's work, Juno repaired to Peggy's hut, and received the reward of her benevolent labours from witnessing the joy her tidings occasioned. She led Phebe home with her as soon as everything appeared quiet, and once more permitted the sable lovers to enjoy the happiness of an interview, which not only the gay nature of Cæsar, but the really promising condition of their affairs, rendered infinitely happier than the last. Lucky indeed was it for them that their old friend's measures had been so prompt and so successful, for an event occurred on the morrow which put them both as completely out of the head of the old woman as if they had never existed ; and as the relating this will oblige us to follow Juno to New Orleans, it may be stated here, that the negotiation for the purchase of Cæsar being carried on exactly as she had dictated, proved completely successful. Frederick Steinmark paid a thousand dollars into the hands of an agent at Natchez, and received from him in return the documents necessary to give him the legal possession of Cæsar, who accordingly was found by the Steinmark family the day but one following the transaction busily engaged in earthing up sweet potatoes in the garden at Reichland.

As before this happened old Juno was already on her way to New Orleans, it is probable that all the exertions made for Cæsar would have been in vain had not Edward Bligh shrewdly surmised that in all human probability Phebe knew all about it ; so as soon as the business was completed and the transfer of the runaway legally achieved, he repaired to the hut of Peggy, and told her and her daughter what had been done. It will not be doubted that Juno's "company-chamber" was visited that night, or that the lovers enjoyed the reprieve from danger so unexpectedly obtained. No sooner, indeed, had darkness so far settled upon the woods as to render the annoyance of troublesome questionings tolerably unlikely ; than Peggy herself, accompanied by her three daughters, repaired to Cæsar's hiding-place, and returning

thence to the laundry-house, enjoyed altogether an evening of greater happiness than they had tasted since the hour in which the slaves of the unfortunate Henry Bligh were put up for sale.

Early on the following morning Caesar was already labouring in the garden of Reichland.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It has been stated that Juno had again left Natchez for New Orleans before the good work in which she had so assiduously exerted herself was completed, and it is necessary that the cause of this sudden departure should be now laid before the reader. Early in the day which followed her last visit to Edward, Juno rambled down to Natchez-under-Hill for the purpose of making a visit to an old free negro who held the post of receiver-general of all letters, packages, messages, and advices of all sorts addressed to her by steam-boat from New Orleans.

The place was not without profit and advantages of many kinds; but neither, on the other hand, was it by any means a sinecure,—for more negro gossip, creole scandal, and plantation secrets were transmitted to the reputed sorceress by this old man, who never failed to board every boat that approached the landing for the purpose of collecting the different missions they were sure to bring, than it would have been possible for her to obtain by any other means.

Hardly had Juno entered the hut which served as a mansion to the old man, than he presented to her a sealed packet which had arrived some hours before from New Orleans. She immediately retired, as was her custom whenever news reached her in this form, to a low shed behind the building, where, seated on a block of wood, she broke the seal, and with considerable eagerness set about reading the contents. It came from a person of no small importance in the circle in which he moved at New Orleans, being a free quadroon who for many years had carried on a very prosperous trade as a barber. The letter ran thus :—

“ *Mrs Juno.*

“ This is from your frind Mr. Sam Whitmot. I have big news for you, *Mis Juno*. As sure as I live to tell it, your own truly-begot great-grand-daughter, *Selina Croft* by name, is living at this presint riting in New Orlines. This will make you star, *Mis Juno*, and well it may, for it is a grit and unaccountable interference of Provydance. So it is, howsomewer; and it is of course that you will

come up, Mis Juno, and presint yourself to your posterity. I question if there is another in this big city that knows as much as I do of this rich and beautiful young lady; and knowing, Mis Juno, the spite of our enimes upon us, I'll tak good care that nobody shall know nothing from me. My three-pair-of-stairs back-granary is not ocied at presint, Mis Juno, and you may rint the apartment as before. When you come, I will tell you all particlars how I made the discovery. But the best is, I'm pretty considerable sure that the father as brought her knows no more about her mother's decent than all the fine creole folks as have made acquaintance with her. It is right and proper the young creature should be made to know her own blood relations; but excepting herself, and maybe her father, if I was you, Mis Juno, I'd jest keep the secret, and you may guess pretty easy why, seeing that; lots of whites are making as much ado with her as if she was a right-down princess. It will be for certain, Mis Juno, a pleasure for you to see such a lily-white posterity. Arnt the whites unaccountable, Mis Juno, that cant see how easy it is for black blood to turn white? 'Tis plain enough, that Goda'mighty has no objection whatsumever to it, at any rate. Good-by, Mis Juno, I shall be proud to see you, and I am your true friend.

"and most obedient humble servant,

"SAM WILMOT."

The effect produced by this letter on the body and soul of Juno was tremendous. Her limbs shook as if she had been seized by sudden palsy, and for some time all the powers of her mind seemed threatening to leave her. All the strength and intellect left her were just sufficient to enable her to hide the precious letter in her bosom, and to totter forth from the place where she had read it into the open air, without uttering a single word of explanation to her puzzled agent.

Having reached a retired spot by the river-side, where no eye was near to watch her, she sat or rather laid herself upon the ground, and gave free vent to the emotion that was swelling at her heart. It was long before the vehemence of her agitation subsided sufficiently to enable her fully to be conscious what this news was to her; but as something like strength and composure returned, a feeling of happiness almost too great to bear took possession of her, and there she continued stretched immoveable upon the earth for many hours, her memory recalling the long-distant past so vividly as to make all present and actual circumstances appear vague and indistinct by the comparison. Among all other things, the situation of Cæsar was totally and altogether forgotten by her, and she at once decided upon going on board the first boat that should come down the river. The hoarded treasure of many years was always concealed about her person, and no preparation was necessary for her voyage except the obtaining such refreshment as might give her strength to mount to the deck. This she speedily procured, and then sat herself under the old thorn beside the landing, waiting with the stillness of a statue for the vessel that was to convey her to New Orleans.

The sun was setting when it arrived, but the hours she had waited had not been lost. She had passed this interval in earnest meditation on the great change she believed her hitherto sad destiny was about to undergo, and had so exactly arranged the manner of it, that all nervous agitation subsided, and she held herself prepared for the scenes in which she was to become a principal actor with a degree of firmness and resolution which communicated itself to her outward bearing, and enabled her, the morning after she reached New Orleans, to receive the greeting of Whitlaw with the calmness and composure that have been described.

Several days elapsed after her arrival before she sought the interview which her heart both longed for and dreaded. It was not fear, however, which caused the delay, but prudence. On reaching New Orleans, she found her friend Mr. Sam Wilmot absent; and as it was chiefly to letters and memoranda in his possession that she must apply if the truth of her statement should be unhappily questioned, she postponed the awful visit till his return.

Meanwhile, however, she wearied not of walking round and round the house that contained her treasure; but the state and wealth that seemed to reign there shook her confidence, and the poor old woman lived in alternate paroxysms of hope and fear till the terrible moment which brought home to her heart the conviction that she could perhaps exercise a power that might blight the happiness of her descendant for ever, but that never, never could she hope either to give or receive the dear joy that affection alone can bestow, by claiming kindred with her.

Had such a scene as that described between Juno and the fair Selina taken place some twenty years before, it is probable that it would have driven the old woman into raving madness; but strong as her feelings still were, they were tame and tranquil compared to what they had been—and though her heart was wrung with a degree of anguish not easy to describe, her intellect stood the shock without her manifesting any symptoms of her former malady.

She shut herself up in her lonely garret, and for some days only left it for the purpose of taking necessary food. At length her mind was made up as to the line of conduct she should pursue, and doing her best to render her appearance decent, she descended the innumerable stairs, and requested a private interview with her friendly host Mr. Sam Wilmot, in his snug back parlour, at the early hour of seven in the morning.

The request was immediately granted, and as Mr. Wilmot, in common with many others, believed Juno to be free, she was desired to take a seat in his prosperous presence.

"Mr. Sam," said Juno, making a powerful effort to restrain all

outward demonstration of sorrow, "you have been a good and kind friend to me for many a year, and now at this last trial you have just done all that you thought would best please me. But things have not turned out just quite as I thought they might, and so, Mr. Sam, I expect I had better go home again. But this I cannot do in peace and quiet without your giving me a word of promise, Mr. Sam, that you will never, never, never breathe to mortal man, woman, or child, that the Englishman's fair daughter is come of negro race. Will you promise this to me, Mr. Sam?"

"If it will please you, Miss Juno, I will be happy to promise it; though I can't but think 'tis but an unnatural thing too. However, I know better than to make or meddle, Miss Juno, with what does not concern myself, and I'm mum, you may 'pend upon it."

Having obtained this assurance, old Juno once more took her way to the house of Mr. Croft. Wherever there are negroes, the entrance of a negro is easy: Juno had already propitiated the kindness of a black cook and scullion in the kitchen of Mr. Croft, and she was courteously received when she again made her entry there.

"Can I see the young lady," she said, "before the business and bustle of the day begins?—I am going away to-day, and I have still something I must say to her."

"Ah, Miss!" said the black cook shaking her head very mournfully, "you have brought sad work to pass. Is it true, I wonder, all that the white waiting-maid says—did you tell the young lady to her face that she was come of nigger blood?"

Juno was greatly shocked to hear that her interview with her still fondly-cherished Selina had been made thus public; but finding that any farther attempt at concealment on her part must be in vain, she stated to her fellow-slave in plain terms the history of her relationship, and added, with as much composure as she could assume, that finding the knowledge of this gave the dear child too bitter pain and mortification to be endured, she was determined upon returning to her home at Natchez as soon as she should have once more seen and bade her farewell.

"And fit and right too, miss, dat you should see your own,—for so she is, do aft dat dey can to hinder it. I hab a child too, miss, and I know what it is to lub it."

"Then you will let me see her," said Juno eagerly.

"Ay, miss, without doubt. The proud white maid is a-bed still, but Venus shall take you to her room."

Venus was accordingly summoned, and, to avoid disturbing Mr. Croft, led Juno by a back-stair to a door that opened into the young lady's dressing-room. She opened it gently, and pointing to that of the bed-chamber which stood half open, she said,

"Now go, miss,—she be your own blood and can't quarrel wid you; but I must go down stairs 'gen, or I shall catch it from Miss Susan."

Saying this, the girl retired, leaving Juno to make her way alone into the presence of her estranged descendant.

The old woman paused for a moment as if to take breath and revive her sinking courage, and then, making an effort to overcome the trembling at her heart, she pushed open the door and entered the bedroom of Selina.

It was now past eight o'clock, but the bright daylight only found entrance there through the closed blinds, and on first going in, the effect to Juno's old eyes was that of almost perfect darkness; but by degrees the objects became visible, and she perceived that the fair creature to whom she came to bid adieu was still in bed. The air of the room was loaded with the perfume of many flowers, and she observed as she advanced, that a variety of blossoms lay scattered on the floor and dressing-table. All was profoundly still.

"She sleeps!" said Juno in a whisper; "sweet child!—most beautiful Selina!—she sleeps the sleep of innocence and peace!"—Then softly approaching the bed, she continued, while her voice trembled with tenderness, "I will kiss her as she sleeps; she will not know it, —she will not shrink from the hateful touch now, and at least I shall have lived to do that which my soul hath longed for through weary years. Selina!—my own Selina!"

The faint light sufficed to show her, as she drew near, the fair young face that rested immovable upon the pillow; the odour of sweet flowers became stronger still, and Juno, as she gazed between the curtains, perceived with surprise that the profusion of dark hair that flowed like sable drapery on each side the face was bound by a wreath of orange-blossoms. The face beneath was whiter than they; and as the dim-eyed old woman gazed upon it, a strange terror seized her.

"Does she live?—does she breathe?" she cried, stretching out a shaking hand to touch her forehead. That touch shot like an ice-bolt through her heart, for her hand rested on the cold marble brow of death.

"Oh, God!—I have killed her!"—shrieked Juno in bitter agony; "she saw me, she knew me, and she died!"

The old woman dropped on her knees beside the bed and sobbed aloud. Earnestly, most earnestly did she pray that the pang which wrung her heart might end her being; but she still lived to look upon that pale and innocent face, so beautiful in death, so like the lovely visions that for long years had visited her dreams, and the terrible idea that her approach had killed her, drew forth the heaviest groans that her long-tortured spirit had ever uttered.

At length her reeling sense became calmer, and she remembered

that the dead Selina was already cold when she first stretched out her hand to touch her. This thought for a moment seemed to bring relief, and she rose from her knees and looked around to discover if possible the cause and manner of her death.

Near to the bed stood a small writing-table, and on it lay a sealed letter. Juno seized it, and with little thought for whom it was intended, broke it open instantly, and, removing one of the blinds, read with some difficulty the following lines :

“ My father, ere these words meet your eyes, your miserable Selina will be no more. But grieve not for this, kind and dear father!—she will be at rest, and that she could never be as long as life flowed through veins stained like hers. Father! that man—that Whitlaw, whom my soul abhorred as if by instinct—he knows the dreadful secret of my birth.—He has been here, father; he has loaded me with insult—he permitted me to sit in his presence as a matter of grace and favour—he offered, as an honour, to make me his mistress. Father! father!—forgive me! I cannot live to remember this.—My destiny, my frightful destiny is the will of God. I know it, father; I know that this dreadful will was stamped upon my wretched race thousands of years ago.—But the Saviour has been since—the curse will not cling to us for ever!—Let me go to him—he will pity and receive me. And you too, father, pity and forgive me. I have this night taken bread and wine with you in His name, through you knew it not; and I felt it was a holy sacrament, and you blessed me.—But do not wish me to live and hear again such words as Whitlaw spoke to me to-day. No, father, no; I cannot live!—*my punishment is greater than I can bear.* Farewell!—kind and dear father, farewell!—we shall meet in heaven.

“ SELINA.”

In many places there were traces of tears upon the paper, and the whole of it was evidently written in great and terrible agitation. But the deliberate preparation—the wreath that bound her virgin brow—the flowers that were strewed upon her couch—and still more, the supper of bread and wine to which she alluded, plainly showed that it was not in a moment of sudden agony that she resigned her life, but that many hours of meditation had preceded the act. A small bottle, labelled “*LAUDANUM*,” which made part of their travelling medicine-chest, stood on the toilet, and indicated with sufficient clearness the manner of her death.

Slowly and with faltering steps did Juno pace round the fatal chamber, conning over every object that served to interpret the tale of woe of which it was the scene. It seemed that the unhappy girl had placed herself on the ground to prepare her funeral wreath; for at one point the floor was strewed with fragments of leaves and stems, and close beside it stood her toilet-stool, covered with the relics of the beautiful gleaning which she had gathered with her own hands and borne in her bosom to her chamber,

With her habitual acuteness, nothing blunted by the sorrow at her heart, Juno pondered on all she saw, till every scene and act of the tragedy became intelligible to her. Then did she sadly turn again to the light, and once more peruse the letter of Selina.

There is ever a strong propensity in the human mind to exonerate the conscience from its share of whatever suffering weighs upon the spirits, by laying the guilt that produced it on another. Juno's first pang as she gazed on the dead Selina was that of self-reproach. It was her thoughtless and selfish pride that had brought sorrow and destruction on the unhappy girl, and gladly would she have redeemed the fault by resigning her own remnant of life to restore her. But now it was Whitlaw against whom all the anguish that wrung her heart turned for atonement and revenge: it was no longer herself, but the detested Whitlaw who had laid her low; and the springs of life seemed renewed in their energy as she once more dropped upon her knees beside the bed of death, and registered in heaven a vow of fearful vengeance.

She arose from her terrible orison, calm, firm, and confident in strength; and replacing the letter on the desk, returned by the way she came, just as the hand of the English waiting-maid was attempting in vain to open the usual door of entrance to the chamber of her mistress.

Greatly to the comfort of Juno, she found her way out of the house without interruption; and shrinking from the task of relating the scene she had witnessed to any one, she instantly determined, with her usual promptitude of action, to leave New Orleans immediately.

"At home," she muttered,—“it is at home, on my own silent, quiet hut, that all the thoughts that now roll through my brain like the dark clouds of a coming thunder-storm must be gathered together—and then they will take form and substance—and then they will burst—and then the bolt will fall!”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AFTER leaving the presence of Selina, Whitlaw again visited Hogstown, and related to him with great glee the amusing narrative of her newly-discovered birth and kindred.

“Arn’t it capital, Hogstown?” said he, rubbing his hands and chuckling with delight. “The story wouldn’t have been that bad, if it had happened to a proud creole miss who had presumed to turn up her

nose at one; but to overtake the heiress daughter of a d—d proud Englishman, is altogether one of the best bits of fun as I ever came across with. Arn't it capital?"

The story was certainly one likely to find favour with many at New Orleans; and as the young man judged, from the manner in which his proposals for keeping it secret had been received by the hapless Selina, that there was no very good chance of his being paid for his silence, he indulged himself by repeating it with great animation and spirit, both at the billiard and rouge-et-noir tables, which he visited the night after his last interview with her.

Towards noon on the following day, some rumours of the terrible catastrophe began to spread through the city. The physician who was called in by the wretched father to see if any remains of life still lingered at the heart of his unfortunate child, reported the adventure wherever he went, together with the vows of vengeance breathed by the bereaved parent against him to whom the last communication of his daughter pointed as the cause of the act which had left him childless.

These rumours soon reached Whitlaw; and if old Juno took her departure with celerity for the purpose of arranging more at her ease the schemes of vengeance she meditated, Whitlaw's movements were at least equally rapid and decisive in quitting the scene where alone he believed any disagreeable consequences were likely to follow the part he had acted in the tragedy, which was becoming every hour more universally the theme of conversation.

It was hard, certainly, to be obliged so suddenly to quit a place so every way agreeable to him; but Whitlaw was nevertheless far from insensible to the consolation that this necessity had not overtaken him before he had realised such a sum as to make his retirement with it decidedly a matter of triumph. He went, too, with the pleasant conviction that he had been "handsomely revenged" for the twofold injury he had received at New Orleans; namely, the abduction of his money, and the scorning of his love; so, after a long and confidential conversation with Hogstown, who promised to supply him with all the information which his rapid retreat prevented his acquiring, he too took leave of New Orleans.

Hogstown kindly accompanied him to the water's edge; and his parting words were, "Remember them varmint Germans, Whitlaw. I shan't be long after, I expect: and if between us we can't clear 'em out, 'twill be queer, I guess."

"I'll do what I can to be ready for ye, my man," was the laughing reply. "I've a notion, Hogstown, that you and I together might do pretty nigh anything we set our wits to—hey?"

"Maybe we might, Master Whitlaw. But off with ye—she's puffing like mad. Don't forget the parson neither.—Good-bye."

It was fortunate for Juno's equanimity that she escaped the chance of seeing Whitlaw on board the vessel that conveyed her to Natchez. Little as the communion between blacks and whites might be, she could hardly have been in the same boat without seeing him, and she was in a state of mind to render such a meeting very dangerous to herself at least. As it was, she reached her lonely dwelling without seeing or hearing anything to disturb the sort of artificial calm into which she had brought herself, and upon which depended, as she justly believed, her best chance of success in the new project she meditated.

The night on which she reached her home was passed in the silence and solitude she longed for, but without the relief of a single moment's sleep. She laid herself upon her bed, indeed, but her over-excited faculties seemed to have recovered all the vigour of youth, and she retraced with steady and unfailing recollection the long account of all she had endured from the tyrannous power usurped over her unoffending race by the cruel strength of their white brethren. She remembered the wanton development of all the faculties in herself which had opened so many new avenues of torture to her heart,—the light breath of love that had passed over her like the idle breeze of the false-seeming spring, feeling like the sweet air of heaven, but proving a blighting blast that cankered and mildewed her poor heart for ever. She recalled with maddening truth the first warm touch of her dear infant's lips upon her bosom,—the last agonising kiss that she was permitted to press upon them as she was torn away from her; the savage transfer of her loathing person to another—the brutal force that kept her soul and body in a subjection that seemed to make every breath she drew a poison to her nature,—her long, her patient unrequited service,—her dishonoured age—the conscious treasures of her mind converted to footery and fraud. She remembered all—all that she might have been, all that in truth she was. And then came the closing item to this dread account—her lovely, her innocent, her own Selina—the being that her long-suffering life had passed in dreaming of, laid dead and stiff before her by the blasting breath of a reptile whose immortal soul she felt to be as much beneath her own in dignity, as he dared hold her unoffending race to his.—"Shall he escape me, God of justice!" exclaimed the aged sufferer, trembling and exhausted by the long backward course her too faithful memory had run,—
"shall he escape?"

Some feeling arising from a consciousness of the power she held over many human agents stole soothingly upon her senses, and just as

night was giving place to morning, Juno fell into so profound a sleep that the light was again fading when she woke from it.

It was then indeed the touch of Phebe's hand upon her shoulder, rather than the natural end of her deep repose, which at length caused old Juno to open her eyes, and once more to feel with a sigh that she was still numbered with the living.

"Oh, Juno! you are come back at last!" exclaimed Phebe, in a voice of such cheerful gaiety that the old woman looked at her with surprise. "How very glad I am to see you!—how I have longed to kiss and thank you, Juno!"

"Thank me—for what, Phebe?—what have I done to please you?"

"Oh, Juno!—can you ask that question, and I the happiest girl in the wide world, and all your doing, Juno; for wasn't I the most miserable, poor broken-hearted soul that ever cried through the live-long night, till you set about to help me?"

"And where is Cæsar, then?" said Juno, suddenly recollecting herself.

"Where should he be," replied the laughing Phebe, "but just where it was your pleasure and will that he should be, Juno?—And, do you know, mother," she continued more gravely, "I have truly need of all my Christian knowledge to keep me from believing that you have indeed some spirits to do your bidding;—but they are good spirits, Juno, at any rate, and your power, let it be what it will, must, I am very sure, come to you from Heaven."

"I am glad you are so happy, Phebe," said the poor old woman, while an unseen tear trembled in her eye.

"How I do love you, Juno!" cried Phebe, throwing her arms round her friend's neck, and giving her a most cordial kiss.

"Do you, my poor girl?" replied Juno, while the tear rolled down her cheek. "I am glad you are not white, Phebe."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the gay-hearted girl, again laughing heartily; "that is queer to be thankful for. However, I don't care now what colour I am: if Master Whitlaw don't come back to plague me, I shall be as happy as a lily-white queen."

A quivering shudder passed through every limb of Juno as she heard the name; but Phebe saw it not, and though it was in some sort received as law throughout the estate that no one was to question Juno concerning her frequent journeyings, the gay state of her spirits at the present moment led her to transgress the law, and she said, "How very long you have been away, Juno!—Where can you have been to?—and how many times do you think Cæsar and I have come after work-hours to look for you?"

"I shall go away no more, Phebe," replied the old woman, gently, and without any symptom of the displeasure which an inquiry would have formerly produced.

"No!" rejoined the girl cheerfully; "that's good news at any rate, for you are never away, Juno, that I don't wish you back again.—But now, good night! Get to sleep again as fast as you can, for I must be off; for, you see, I just think it's possible the smart new gardener at Reichland may take it into his head to pay mother a visit to-night." And with these words, she was tripping away, when Juno stopped her by saying, in a very feeble voice,

"Phebe, dear, I have eaten nothing this day. Look on the shelf there, before you go; and if you can find a morsel of corn-cake, give it to me."

"My —! not eaten to-day!—oh, how bad you must be, Juno! But where's the meal, and where's the tinder-box?—you don't think you're going to eat cake a hundred years old, Juno?" And without waiting for an answer, the active, helpful girl bustled about till she found what she sought, and in marvellously little time two or three light Johnny-cakes (which, being interpreted, mean *journey-cakes*, from the rapidity with which they may be prepared) smoked on a board before a blazing fire. Materials for the universal beverage, coffee, were also found, and in a few minutes the failing strength of poor Juno was recruited by the refreshment she so greatly needed.

"But your Cæsar is waiting for you all this time, Phebe," said the old woman, as if to try the constancy of the assiduous kindness that was so warmly demonstrated.

"Well!" replied the sable beauty, "if he is not tired with his waiting to-night, he may come again to-morrow—thanks to your kindness, Juno! and God Almighty bless you for it!"

"I am very glad you are not white, Phebe," reiterated Juno; "but go away home now, dear, perhaps he mayn't be gone yet."

"Go away home, Juno? and leave you to eat and drink by yourself—and you not over-well, I expect, either? I tell you, Juno dear, that we will just see if Master Cæsar will be affronted, or if he will come again orderly and civil to-morrow night, as he ought to do.—Don't fancy you have done yet, Juno. Here's another beautiful cake, better baked and lighter than either; and while you eat it, I'll tell you all the news. And, first, as in duty bound, I must tell you of our colonel; and he's sick, they say, and has taken it into his head that he's poisoned, because his blessed clerk is not here to watch him: that's the best news from the great house. And dear blessed Miss Lucy has been out to see us, and came, bless her, in the middle of the night, though she had got to go back to Natchez. And you've been gone two

Sundays, Juno, and the people haven't one of them budged an inch towards the forest for prayer-meeting, because, they say, you did not tell them that they might go ; and our master Edward has been sorely vexed about it, Juno. But now you are come again, all will go right, won't it ?"

"It was a sin to forget it, Phebe ; but I *did* forget it, and may God forgive me ! but we shall have need to watch as well as to pray, Phebe, for the drivers are like ravening wolves after all who would teach us God's word."

"I expect, Juno, that is because they think God's word too good and precious for us blacks, and so they would keep it for their own use and salvation. But if Master Edward speaks right—and I am not going to doubt it—some of it was meant for us ; and them who would rob us of the share intended for our use, Juno, will have a worse sin to answer for, I expect, than if they stole the colonel's silver plate big cup that they tell of, and all. Don't you think they will, Juno ?"

"It is a joy to think it, Phebe," said the old woman, eagerly, and with an expression of countenance far unlike the gentle look of the well-taught and truly Christian Phebe : "it is a joy to believe that all will be made even hereafter ; and for that belief, if for nothing else, every slave should be a Christian."

"I don't want it to be paid 'em back in full, neither, Juno," said Phebe gently ; "and I don't think quite that it will—God is too pitiful for that."

But here the discussion was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Caesar, who, with the faith of a true heart, in the affection of his sable love, felt sure that as she was not at home to receive him, she must be attending some duty that detained her elsewhere. The remote hut of old Juno, their common benefactress, was therefore the spot where he sought her, instead of amidst the gossiping gatherings together of the slaves, who were many of them eating their suppers in the open air.

"I thought so !" exclaimed he, gaily entering the hut, after listening for a moment at the door of it ; "I thought where I should find Miss Phebe. And how is our dear mother, Phebe ? I am thankful she is come back to us ; for they do so talk of her at *our house*, and our Miss Lotte wants to see her again so much, that it will be a glory to tell 'em she's home again. Ah, mother !" continued he, laughing, "I'm not after bringing Phebe any more beef-steaks now. But Master Edward says we shall have a decent Christian wedding in the forest—and he will do the parson's part himself, God bless him ! and we've only waited for you, Juno, to bring the congregation back to witness

it—for there isn't a man or woman of them all, as I find from mother Peggy, that will budge a step to pray in the woods till you tell 'em there's no danger."

Cæsar stopped for a moment to take breath, and Juno seized the opportunity to ask him if he was contented with his new place.

"Contented, mother!—oh, 'tis like being in heaven, or back with old master in Kentuck over again. Each one of 'em all tries to beat all the rest in kindness to the poor runaway; and only that they are afraid to make mischief, or they would come every soul of them to make acquaintance with my wife that is to be: and my beautiful Miss Lotte tells me that she means to be after coaxing you, Juno, to persuade your sour-old colonel to sell Phebe to my master. Will you, Juno? do you think you can? Say, Juno?"

"There's few things impossible, Cæsar, except making a thorough-going slave-driving white man fit for heaven. Don't ask this of me, for I won't try it: but I'll do what I can, my children, to make you both content, for you are black and innocent and kind-hearted, and you deserve to be happy. And now away with you both! Back to your mother, Phebe, or maybe she'll be uneasy for you. Good night, my children, good night!"

"Good night, dear mother! good night!" repeated Cæsar, taking Phebe's hand, and appearing to be leading her off, but lingering at every step to say another happy word.

"Think, mother, if you could get Phebe there, what a life she would lead, always waiting upon Miss Lotte maybe, as she did before, or precious Miss Lucy. And Miss Lotte's going to be married too, they do so say,—just think of that, mother: and the Herr Hochland maybe will take us both to a free country—think of that, mother."

"And I just want to go to sleep again—think of that, Cæsar," said old Juno good-humouredly; "so just go your ways home, both of you, and we'll see what can be done for Phebe."

The happy pair retreated; but though soothed and softened by the endearments of those who truly loved her, the wounded spirit of the miserable old woman did not again find rest till many hours had been spent by her in meditating on the scheme of her revenge. Agents of powerful physical strength would be needed to execute the plan that had taken possession of her soul, and for a moment she thought that the strong feelings and profound gratitude of Cæsar pointed him out as one well fitted to aid her purpose.

"He has good reason to hate the wretch, as well as I have," thought she; "and by doing my terrible bidding, he would not only cancel the debt of gratitude he owes me, but make me for ever his debtor. Where can I find another so bound to me as he?"

But something at her heart told her, that holy as she deemed the vengeance she proposed to take, it would not accord with the principles in which Cæsar was reared, to join her in it.

"He bears so light, so innocent a heart," thought she, "that it were deadly sin to lay on it the weight of blood. I—even I, bound by a thousand iron chains to do the deed—shall I ever sleep after it as I did through the long peaceful hours of this day? Will not the ghastly blood-stained visage ever rise before me?—shall I not see his young hair matted stiff in blood? I shall—I shall, and Selina will be avenged! Waking or sleeping, my harassed spirit will still rejoice; for I shall have accomplished my destiny.—But poor Cæsar, happy, light-hearted boy! he shall know nothing of it. There are others—alas, too many!—who groan in the chains this wretch has tightened round them, and they will feel as I do, that when they grapple for his life, they do but perform the duty to which fate has called them.—No, Cæsar shall know nothing of it."

And as she came to this resolution, she turned on her hard pillow, and once more dropped asleep.

CHAPTER XL.

CÆSAR's first care on the ensuing morning was to repair to the dwelling of Edward Bligh. No longer under the lash of a task-master, he feared not to steal from sleep an hour or two for his garden, that with a safe conscience he might for the same space leave his work upon a business so very near his heart as the informing his first and kindest friend, that old Juno was returned, and only waited his orders to give notice to "the people" to again assemble themselves that they might have the Gospel preached to them.—"And then, Master Edward," continued Cæsar, looking timidly in Edward's eyes for his consent—"then we may be married—Phebe and I, Master Edward?—may we?"

"Alas my poor fellow!" replied Edward mournfully, "I am no ordained minister, nor even an appointed magistrate to do this for you; but yet I do believe that in the eyes of the Most High the ceremony that shall be read to you under the arch of Heaven even by me shall suffice to bless your union."

"That means that you will do it, sir?" said Cæsar, bewildered, and breathless with hope and joy.

"It does, Cæsar. I will not refuse to aid you as best I can in this. And tell old Juno, since it is her voice only that can give them

courage to lift their hearts to God—tell old Juno, Cæsar, to lead the people to me at the usual hour on next Sabbath night. My heart yearns to meet them ; but it is yet five days to it."

"Dreadful long time ! dreadful long time !" murmured Cæsar as, after many bows and thanks, he withdrew. "Why did not old Juno come home Saturday ?"

He hastened back to his work ; but having reached the garden, he felt so infinitely too happy to know what he was about, and so certain that he would do more harm than good there, that upon seeing Lotte and the Herr Hochland walking under the avenue of peach-trees at the bottom of the garden, he ran towards them, and clasping his hands together with a look that seemed to say, "You too must understand all about it," he implored their interest to procure him a day's holiday from "the master."

"Oh, Miss Lotte ! when one is going to be married, you see, the head will run upon it, do what one will. Don't it, master ? And what good is it to stand with a hoe or a spade in one's hand, if one can't tell for the life of one where one ought to stick it first ? Will ye speak a word for me, Miss Lotte ? I will pray that you may both be jest as happy as I am now, if you will but get me this one day's holiday. For there's my poor Phebe, Miss Lotte, don't know it yet ; and how should you like, Miss Lotte, to be left in ignorance so ?"

"I'll go, I'll go, Cæsar," cried Lotte, running off very swiftly.—"And I'll help too, Cæsar," said the young baron in his best English, as he flew after her.

Such a request, to such a quarter, and seconded by such interest, was not likely to fail, and in a few moments Cæsar was bounding over ziz-zag fences, wide ditches, and stumps innumerable, to communicate to the lady of his heart, that master Edward had consented to marry them on the ensuing Sabbath in the midst of the forest congregation.

The young Phebe received the intelligence with tears and smiles, and burned her taper fingers with the iron she was employing upon one of the colonel's own shirts, in her efforts to keep her volatile bridegroom in order. But, less happy than him, she dared not leave her allotted task, and finding that his presence was far from aiding her in the performance of it, she begged him to leave her till the hours of labour were over.

"Now isn't that altogether unreasonable, Phebe ?—and can't I help her, mother Peggy ?—and did anybody ever send off a poor fellow at such time before ?" To all which he received for answer that go he must, or that Phebe would get punished for scorching the linen. Seeing, however, that he looked really and truly miserable, his gentle-hearted mistress found him an occupation for his holiday at once delightful to him and gratifying to herself.

"There is a thing, Cæsar, that you could do to-day," she said, "that would be better than helping me spoil all the colonel's clothes, and it would make next Sabbath a blessed day indeed!"

"And a blessed day it will be, Phebe, as ever God-a'mighty made—don't you be doubting that: but tell me, Phebe dear, what is it I can do to please you?"

"Can you walk to Natchez, Cæsar? Can you find out my own dear Miss Lucy? Can you tell her, Cæsar, what is going to be? And can you beg her, for the sake of the precious love she has ever shown her poor Phebe, to stand by her on next Sabbath night?"

"Can I?—and will I?—and won't I?" cried the happy Cæsar, capering like a young Newfoundland-dog when a favourite hand has thrown a stone or a stick for him to follow. "I expect I will, Miss Phebe; and I expect that I will bring you word too, that she's most as happy as you are, and that she'll come and stand by you in the moonshine, looking jest like an angel as she is."

The young lover then snatched a kiss as his self-allotted reward for this agreeable prophecy, and instantly set off upon his mission.

When the heart is light and beats gaily, the step in general keeps time with it,—and so it was with Cæsar. In little more than half an hour after receiving his mistress's commands, he entered the door of Mrs. Shepherd's store at Natchez, and standing before her very respectfully cap in hand, begged to know if he could speak a word to Miss Lucy Bligh.

"And who may you be sent by?" said the sour Mrs. Shepherd with the glance of an inquisitor.

She could hardly have put an inquiry in a more puzzling form. Whom was Cæsar sent by? certainly by the most charming slave in the world, and the very particular friend and favourite of the young lady he had asked for; but he knew well enough, poor fellow, that this would not avail him, for a slave was but a slave after all. He changed his attitude twice before he had decided what it would be best to answer, and then said,

"I am jest come from Colonel Dart's plantation, mistress, and 'tis by one there that I am sent."

"One there?—and do you think, you stupid fellow! that I shall let my young ladies be called out from their work to see a nigger that is sent by one at Colonel Dart's plantation? One what, pray?—one nigger, perhaps?"

Poor Cæsar had not a word to say for himself in answer to this shrewd conjecture, and having twisted himself about for a minute in very evident embarrassment, he ended by saying, "It would be right-down kind of you, mistress, jest to let me speak a minute to Miss Lucy."

"I do wonder what the niggers will come to!" exclaimed Mrs. Shepherd, turning to a gentleman who was cheapening cotton neck-cloths. "Now did you ever, sir?—I expect you'd better be after returning the way you came, you saucy fellow, and not bide here looking to be waited upon by the young ladies of my establishment."

"'Tis pretty considerable cool, that's a fact," replied the customer. —"Mayhap, my fine fellow, you may be sent with a love-token to the young lady?"

"Like enough, sir," said Mrs. Shepherd tartly. "Let's see what you've brought, young man;" and she held out her hand to receive the suspected love-letter.

"Not I, indeed, mistress!" exclaimed Cæsar. "Miss Lucy isn't one to receive love-letters that fashion. Please, mistress, let me jest speak one little word to her."

"You are a very impudent fellow to stand there persevering at me that rate. Do you expect that I sit here to do your errands, and run backwards and forwards to fetch out my young ladies from their work to talk to all the black niggers in town? Be off, if you please, and quit—you'd best, I can tell you, before I fetch them that will make ye."

"And so, mistress, you positive won't let me speak to Miss Lucy Bligh?" said Cæsar, with something like indignation in his tone.

"My—!" exclaimed Mrs. Shepherd, "you are going to knock me down, I expect! Jest hear him, sir. People may well say that the niggers will get to be our masters if we don't look sharp."

"I say, my black prince," said the cheapener of neckcloths, "I expect you had better quit before worse comes. Off with ye, and be thankful."

The *gentleman* raised his cane as he spoke, and poor Cæsar, his heart swelling with vexation, silently turned from them and left the shop.

"A first-rate black blackguard that, Mrs. Shepherd! He looked monstrous as if he'd like to eat us both up, bones and all. A couple of hundred lashes would do him a deal of good, I guess. What was the gal's name as he asked for?"

"Bligh, Mr. Smith; Miss Lucy Bligh. She hasn't been with me long, and I calculate she won't, if she's to have such followers as that chap after her. A pretty life I shall have to lead, if I'm to sit here and be bullied by all the niggers in town and country as choose to come in messages to my gals!"

"Bligh?" repeated Mr. Smith, without appearing to hear this trade. "That's queer too; and the name's not that common neither. I say, Mrs. Shepherd, do you happen to know anything about that gal Bligh?"

"Why, perhaps not altogether so much as I ought, Mr. Smith, seeing that I has set her to work with ladies of such good standing as mine. But she's no bad needle, and not much to complain of in the way of manner; but I don't know what her raising has been, that's a fact."

"Well, now, do you know, Mrs. Shepherd, I'm altogether curious to find out something about her, and not without good reason neither. I needn't tell such a sensible woman as you, that these are ticklish times, Mrs. Shepherd, and that it behoves the masters to look pretty sharp after the slaves; for, thanks to them eternal English, there's damnable doctrines going."

"You may say that, Mr. Smith!" responded Mrs. Shepherd with a sigh.

"But after all, Mrs. Shepherd, it isn't half so much the niggers themselves, as the rascally whites, that puts 'em up to mischief and emancipation, and the devil's own laws about slavery, that we have got to fear. Lord bless your soul! if the d—d missionary chaps would but let them alone, the nigger beasts would go on, and be born and flogged, and work and die, world everlasting amen, and nobody say a word against it, good, bad, or indifferent. 'Tis these canting hypocrites, I tell you, with their Bibles and their preachments, that does all the damage; and 'tis against them, you see, as in duty bound, that we gentlemen planters are setting our strength. And that brings me round to this name of Bligh, Mrs. Shepherd. I know I may trust you, for your principles are sound: I remember the plague and trouble you got into about the flogging that gal that died afterwards, and how powerful you spoke up against the French surgeon that wanted to make you answerable. You conducted throughout like a true-hearted Louisianian and a patriot. We've none of us forgot it, I promise you; and that's one reason, I take it, why you have the best creole custom in Natchez."

Mrs. Shepherd smiled very complacently at the compliment, and modestly replied, that it was always her study to follow to the best of her power the example set her by the gentry of the best standing in the state,—“But what was it, Mr. Smith,” she added, “that you was going to say to me about the name of Bligh?”

“I'll tell you exact and confidential, Mrs. Shepherd; and the affair's no trifling one neither, I can tell you. You know Hogstown? him that was overseer, I mean, to General Dissequeur, for so many years. Well, we've all subscribed and handsome too, to give Hogstown a salary for keeping a look-out far and near for all strangers suspected of preaching and praying. We couldn't have hit upon a better man, I promise ye. He's first-rate, upon my word, quite remarkable, and I calculate that we may be lucky enough to find an example before long

to try a little Lynch-law upon. Depend upon it, Mrs. Shepherd, there's nothing as would do us so much good as that. But to come to the point, you must know that Hogstown has got his eye upon a young fellow called Bligh, that hails from Kentucky by his own account—but at any rate he is a stranger in these parts; and Hogstown has fished out, the Lord knows how, that this Bligh is dreadful pitiful and tender-hearted over the niggers, and that he frequents a family of German foreigners, downright anti-slavery folks, for they're as rich as Jews, and yet don't own a slave, and a deal more beside about him that I can't justly remember; but it all goes to this, that he thinks there's a pretty considerable good chance of bringing him in guilty of some of the damnable preaching and praying practices that we're on the lookout for: and if he succeeds, we're agreed among ourselves, Mrs. Shepherd, to get up a sort of a riot, you see, to set at him; and then, if happens that they let blood, why 'twill do a deal of good to the state, you may depend upon that; for there's great symptoms of fever about, I can tell you."

"You need not tell me that, Mr. Smith,—I'm sorry to say I know it over well myself. I can't sleep for thinking of it; and happy and thankful will I be if anything can be done for the public good, and to keep all quiet. God grant that it may last out my time! but I *do* think there's mischief brewing, Mr. Smith."

"You an't the only one that lies awake in Louisiana for that, Mrs. Shepherd. And so, you see, there's reason good for picking up one's ears for such a name as Bligh. Do you think, ma'am, 'tis possible the young woman can be any kin to him?"

"The most possible thing in the whole world, Mr. Smith; and I'd wager a dollar to a cent that I've had the very identical man in my store, sir. I think 'tis a matter of a month ago, or near it, that a pale, tall, soft-spoken young man, altogether a stranger to me and mine, and, I expect, to all Natchez into the bargain, come here speering for needle-work for his sister. I wasn't over and above inclined to have anything to say to him, that's a fact; but I happened to have a deal of pressing work in the house, and I was afraid of my life that I should be obligated to disappoint one or two planters' ladies as was in a vast hurry for their things, and so I yielded just for a trial, and the gal come over in a waggon the next market-day from somewhere back in the woods, and here she's been ever since. But if the chap's her brother, I suppose he's too much taken up with some of his unlawful doings to think much about her, for she come by herself, and he's never been here to look after her since."

"Well, that's remarkable too, an't it?—and the coming of this young nigger to visit her, without having a single word to say for himself as to who sent him? For certain it might help us out con-

siderable, Mrs. Shepherd, if we could certify that this gal's brother is the chap that Hogstown has got his eye upon : and then, you know, we'd get you to watch her a spell; and we might wait from July to eternity before we found out a slicker way to come at him."

"You speak sense, Mr. Smith, and trust to me for having eyes in my head. But, first and foremost, we ought to come to an enlightenment upon the point of whether the man is the right man or not; and I expect that you could conduct so as easy to make this plain, sir."

"Why, I don't rightly know how at this present moment, seeing that Hogstown isn't come back yet from New Orlines—at least I expect not. But I'll tell you, Mrs. Shepherd, who I saw in town to-day, as 'cute a chap and as true a well-wisher to the cause as Hogstown himself—and that's young Whitlaw."

"Very true indeed, sir, he's an unaccountable fine young gentleman; but that don't go to prove as he ever saw this young Bligh, does it, Mr. Smith?"

"You're as sharp as your own needles, ma'am, and upon my word I admire your quick capacity greatly; but I expect I can answer you not that bad either, Mrs. Shepherd. Didn't I explain to you but now how this Bligh, against whom we've got such black suspicions, was hand and glove with the German foreigners as are held to be anti-slavery folks?—Well, then, now I'll come round to the right point, as I always do, I expect, Mrs. Shepherd, in the way of logic and argument. My young friend Whitlaw lives—or at least his father does, with nothing but a zig-zag to part him and the Germans; and I know well enough that they're no strangers, if they're no friends, for I've heard young Whitlaw talk unaccountable of the German's daughter, who is the biggest beauty, by his account, in the whole Union. Come now, Mrs. Shepherd, don't you think it first-rate likely that things being so as I say, that young Whitlaw must know this Bligh gal by sight if she's of that breed we calculate she is?—And if so, couldn't he verify her slick if we could give him a sight of her?"

"That's jest like your 'cuteness, Mr. Smith, I must say; and I'll make no objection to that young gentleman coming here, provided he don't stare at the gal over-much, which would be what I could not approve on no account."

"Oh, trust him for that, Mrs. Shepherd; Whitlaw can behave himself when there's a reason for it. Well, then, I'll step and look after him, shall I?—I know mostly where he's likely to be found, and I shan't be long, you may depend upon it."

CHAPTER XLI.

CLOSE beside the house of Mrs. Shepherd ran one of those dirty little passages which are so numerous in the town of Natchez. This dark alley caught the eye of Cæsar as he left the store where himself and his embrassy had been so roughly treated, and it came into his head that if he turned down it, he should assuredly come upon the kitchen-entrance to the mansion of the uncourteous sempstress. He reasoned farther still, and felt equally certain that not far from this kitchen-entrance he should infallibly encounter some household slave, who, with the natural kindness of the race for each other, would listen to his petition, and obtain for him a moment's sight of Lucy Bligh.

The experiment answered to his wish. The little Dido, already gratefully attached to Lucy for the gentle kindness of the few words that daily passed between them, no sooner comprehended that Cæsar was a person Miss Bligh would like to see, than she promised to let her know he was there. Accordingly she carried into the "keeping room" some glasses of cold water; a volunteer attention which produced no remark, the females of that region being as constant in their demands for "a drink of water" as the superior sex for "a drink of whisky."

The little girl set the waiter upon the table close beside the place where Lucy sat, and furtively but distinctly whispered in her ear as she did so the name of "Cæsar Bush."

Lucy started, but her companions did not remark it, and soon after little Dido had quitted the room she rose to follow her.

"Where are you going, Miss Lucy Bligh?" was uttered in a voice of authority from the chair. "I am going only for a moment, ma'am," was the reply; and as Lucy had never yet been found guilty of even appearing to wish for a moment's idleness, she was permitted to go. Dido stood ready on the outside of the door to receive her, and pressing a finger to her lip in token that silence was desirable, she stepped on before her to the door which led into the lane.

There stood Cæsar impatiently waiting, and wavering between hope and fear for the will and power of his little messenger to perform her promise. "God bless you, Miss Lucy!" he exclaimed eagerly the moment he saw her; "if this isn't a glory to me!—I beg pardon for taking such a great liberty, Miss Lucy, but dear as I love the sight of you, I never would have asked such an unaccountable favour as your coming out here only for a message from Phebe, Miss Lucy."

It will readily be supposed that poor Lucy felt no such apology necessary, but that she listened with the deepest interest to all he had to say; and Cæsar, though she occasionally hinted that she must not prolong her stay, continued to pour out so many eloquent details of his happiness and his hopes, that the minutes flow faster than either of them was aware.

It chanced that as Mr. Smith left the store of Mrs. Shepherd, he saw Whitlaw at the distance of half a dozen paces from him. His business with him was explained in a moment; and though our hero, to the best of his knowledge and belief, had never seen either Bligh or his sister in his life, he concealed the fact with his usual readiness, for the sake of "having a stare at Mrs. Shepherd's gals." They entered the store therefore together, when the lady welcomed the new arrival with great civility, and, fortunately for him, without making any inquiries as to the nature of the evidence which was to prove our poor Lucy to be the sister of "a man forbid."

"Here we are in no time, Mrs. Shepherd," said the facetious Mr. Smith, "and now, by your good will and pleasure, we'll beafter having a peep at that young Miss as negro-boys are making such tender inquiries for."

"It isn't much in my way to show off my young ladies to gentlemen, that's a fact, Mr. Smith: however, there may be reasons, doubtless, for setting the best rules aside. I'd better go myself, I expect, to fetch her, that she mayn't be dashed by learning that there's such gay gentlemen in the store."

Having thus spoken, the stiff Mrs. Shepherd rose to leave the store; but it is probable that some misgiving, or some feeling of the necessity of an ever-watchful eye over the multitudinous articles which adorned it, caused her to check her steps; and ringing her little bell, Miss Tomkins, the lady in waiting for the day, obeyed it, and was gravely desired by her chief to take her place.

Mrs. Shepherd remained absent for some minutes, and at length returned, just as young Whitlaw, to the extreme amusement of Mr. Smith, had gone the unwarrantable length of trying a new cap on the beautifully-curled hair of Miss Tomkins.

Had the presiding lady been at all in her usual state of mind, such a spectacle would unquestionably have produced some very serious consequences: but this was, happily for the young Miss Tomkins, very far from being the case. She entered with the air of one who had made an important discovery, and not even perceiving the offending cap, which was very dexterously replaced on its own proper block by the young lady, she mysteriously beckoned to the two gentlemen to follow her.

They did so instantly, and without demanding any further explana-

tion than that it was her will they should do so. In less than no time, as Mr. Smith would have expressed it, they had passed through one dark and narrow passage into another which crossed it at right angles, and thence again through a kitchen and into a court, the door of which was open, and before it Lucy, in earnest but smiling conversation with the young negro who had so recently been turned with contumely from the presence of two of the persons, who now again seemed ready to launch the thunders of their indignation and contempt upon his head.

Before, however, the approaching party became visible to those without, Mr. Smith laid a hand on each of his companions, and suddenly drew them back. "This is capital!" he exclaimed; "but don't let us spoil all by being in a hurry."

The persons he led obediently yielded to his touch, and no more was said till the kitchen was repassed and they again found themselves in the dark passage behind it.

"It would be worth a hundred dollars," whispered Mr. Smith to his friend Mrs. Shepherd, "if we could but listen to them two a spell without being seen."

"Nothing more easy, Mr. Smith," replied the lady in the same tone. "Look at that bit of grating yonder; they are just exact outside that, if I an't mistaken."

"Don't speak, Whitlew, for your life," said Mr. Smith, gently approaching the aperture; "but jest follow me and listen."

The ears of the two gentlemen were in a moment laid against the grating pointed out to them, and the voice of Cæsar was distinctly heard in an accent of uncontrollable delight.

"On Sunday night then, Miss Lucy, jest exact at midnight, you'll be in the heart of the dear blessed forest, at the hollow bit, you know, jest behind the great knot of maples to the east of Fox's clearing. Arn't I a happy fellow now?"

"Indeed you are, Cæsar," said the gentle voice of Lucy in reply; "but are you quite sure my brother means to preach there next Sabbath night?"

"Am I sure, Miss Lucy? Why, didn't he tell me so himself?"

"That's well then," said Lucy: "and now go, dear Cæsar,—I really must stay no longer. Tell my—"

But at this moment the current of air through the bars caused Mr. Smith to sneeze violently. Lucy started away like a frightened bird in one direction, while the happy and triumphant Cæsar ran off in another. The interruption, however, was of little consequence. The one pair had said enough, and the other heard enough for all their purposes. Lucy glided quickly back to her place at the work-table, while Mrs. Shepherd and the gentlemen returned to the store, where

Miss Tomkins being dismissed, a very interesting consultation took place.

"And what did you contrive to hear, gentlemen?" said Mrs. Shepherd eagerly. "I'm not that short neither, but I couldn't manage to catch a word."

"It don't much matter, I take it, ma'am," said Mr. Smith; "I expect we've heard enough and to spare; and since I was born, I never come near anything to pair it! Did you hear her downright call him her dear? Did you hear, Whitlaw? If my hair don't stand an end, I'll be flogged!"

"And the preaching too; did you hear the pretty appointment she made for her brother as well as for herself?" rejoined Whitlaw. "And the girl's not ugly to look at neither. Wouldn't it be as well, ma'am, for us to have her in, and jest ask her a few questions?"

"I ask your pardon, Whitlaw, for stopping your frolic," said Mr. Smith; "but that's not the way we must manage her. Why, what would that be, but jest so much putting her upon her guard? And if we do but take care a little not to tangle our net, we shall bag 'em all and lose none."

"You're right, sir, and I honour your wisdom," replied Whitlaw. "Faith! this is no moment to be looking in a girl's face to spy if she's pretty. This is a capital find, Mr. Smith, and I only wish Hogstow'n wasn't that far away. If he was here, I'd wager that he'd contrive to have them confounded Steinmarks in it somehow or other, as in justice they ought to be; for they are all of one kidney I promise ye."

"Then if Hogstow'n don't come, we'll manage it without him, Mr. Whitlaw. If they are that way minded, I don't question as one and all they'll be at the preaching; and if so, what's to hinder us, as in course means to be there too, I expect, from pouncing upon 'em at once, and binding 'em hand and foot, as conspirators in a negro rebellion?"

"That sounds right and feasible enough, Mr. Smith; but you've no guess what an old fox this German farmer is. I expect, sir, it wouldn't be no bad scheme if you and I was to away to Mount Etna to talk to my father a spell about him. He knows the old chap better than I do, that's a fact; and if Hogstow'n is right in his surmise about the precious brother of this nigger-fancying Miss, as to his being so hand and glove with the Germans I mean, where's the difficulty but that Mr. Whitlaw of Mount Etna must know it?"

"I'll go with you wherever you please. It's duty and pleasure both to labour in this business. Is Mount Etna a long remove from Natchez, Mr. Whitlaw?"

"A matter of three or four miles, Mr. Smith. But I've got a horse, and so have you, I expect; and the sooner we're about it the better, sir."

"You may say that, Whitlaw, so let's be off. Good afternoon to you, Mrs. Shepherd: you shall have news how we prosper, depend upon me for that."

"Thank you, sir, thank you! God knows, I shall live in hot water till I hear justice is done on this abomination set; for never did my ears hear the like before. But how long am I to bear this horrid gal in my sight, gentlemen? Do pray be speedy in taking her out of my house, for I'm sure I shall never feel safe as long as she remains in it. Who shall answer to me that she shan't let in half a score of her nigger friends and sweethearts, gentleman, and murder us all in our beds?"

"The business will soon be despatched, Mrs. Shepherd, depend upon it, and the gal will be safe enough out of your way. Hogstown will be back to-morrow or next day, I guess; and if things take the turn I look for, it wouldn't do by no means to bring 'em to a conclusion without him: and as to sending the gal off at once, 'tis just giving 'em notice, and we're stumped outright. It will be a glorious day for Natchez I promise you, Mrs. Shepherd, if we can catch a fellow preaching at midnight to the niggers. And I heard the words as plain as if they'd been spoke to me. So be patient a spell, my dear lady, and don't spoil a good hit for a trifle."

"Mrs. Shepherd promised obedience, and the two gentlemen departed.

"The happy Cæsar, meanwhile, hardly felt the ground under him as he bounded away back again to his Phebe; and there was so much fun, frolic, and glee in the manner in which he related his adventures, that the sage Phebe, as well as her two little sisters, laughed long and loud at his story. Nevertheless, he was half ready to cry himself as he described his bitter mortification on finding that "the old gray stick, the missis," would not let him see Miss Lucy. But the triumph, the glory of obtaining all he wanted in spite of her, the "clever smartness" of the little Dido, and finally, the beautiful kindness of Miss Lucy herself, formed altogether a narrative that none of them could be tired of hearing.

It was Peggy who at last broke up the merry meeting, by reminding Cæsar that though his new people had been so unaccountable kind as to give him leave to come a-courting a spell, 'twould be very wrong to stay too late upon it. "There's the flowers to be watered, I'll be answerable, if your new young lady loves 'em as well as our poor dear Miss Lucy; and pretty sorry and mad she'll be in the morning, Cæsar,

to find the blossoms all as dry as a squeezed cane, because you stopped to talk nonsense here."

"Our Miss Lotte is never mad with anybody, mother, but *she* might be vexed mayhap; and so good night, my wife, and good night all the rest of ye, and pray that the Sabbath may come round quick, Phebe. God bless ye all! Good night."

The happy lover hurried away, and was rewarded by arriving in time to help his beautiful young mistress—not in her usual evening attendance, however, upon her favourite flowers, but in running a dozen ways at once, in order to collect the scattered property of Fritz, whom some commercial business of importance obliged to set off early on the following morning for Philadelphia.

He had purposed remaining at Reichland at least a fortnight longer, and this sudden recall produced a chorus of lamentation from the whole family. It produced, however, something else also. Notwithstanding the general gossip of the neighbourhood on the subject, the young Baron Hochland had not, though as heartily in love as a man could be, yet ventured to ask Frederick Steinmark and his Mary if they would give up, and yield to him for ever and for ever, the charge, the care, and the possession of the treasure they valued most on earth.

When the letter which has been heretofore mentioned arrived from the Baron Steinmark, announcing his widowed and childless state, and asking his brother to return with his family to Germany, the hopes of Henrich and Lotte, and perhaps too of the gentle Mary herself, for their return to Europe were greatly excited; for they saw that the melancholy epistle had produced a deep impression upon the voluntary exile, and they believed that he would not have refused the request. But from the day that the letter arrived, the subject had never been alluded to by Frederick Steinmark; and gentle as was the rule he held over them, there was a deference felt, even in their gayest moments, towards him which effectually banished the subject.

It was this reserve, this uncertainty which the family still fancied hung upon the mind of their father, that had kept the young lover from declaring his wishes and his hopes. Were the Steinmark family to return to Germany, he felt that all difficulty would be removed, for then no separation would be needful; but if it were finally decided that they should remain, he dreaded to risk the hope on which he lived, by asking Lotte if she could consent to leave father, mother, brothers, for his sake, and for her native Germany.

But the departure of Fritz brought on the crisis at once. The Herr Hochland had arrived with him as his intimate friend, and as a total stranger to the rest of the family, it therefore was quite natural he should depart with him.

No one could feel this more strongly than the young baron. When Fritz turned to him after perusing his letter, and said, "My furlough is ended, Sigismund! I must depart to-morrow!" the sensation he experienced was not altogether unlike that of being shot. He answered not a word, however, but immediately left the room. In a few minutes afterwards he might have been seen rapidly approaching Frederick Steinmark, whom he had traced to a distant field, and addressing him with a degree of agitation that made the first words he uttered perfectly unintelligible.

He little guessed that while stammering out his proposal of marriage to the tranquil-seeming father of Lotte, the philosopher himself experienced an emotion hardly less powerful than his own. He little guessed that his own timid doubts and fears were the cause of the heavy disappointment which had fallen upon the family, from the silence of its chief respecting the hoped-for return to the land of their fathers. But so it was. Frederick Steinmark had not only submitted cheerfully to his exile—he had most truly gloried in it, as long as he believed that it afforded him the best means of providing for his family without hazarding their independence by placing them in any degree under the protection of a brother whose affection for them was watched by so jealous an eye as that of his wife. But no sooner was this obstacle removed, than all the long-buried feelings, which in a mind less ably regulated would throughout the whole period of his exile have taken the tormenting form of useless regrets, rushed freshly and anew upon his heart; and not even Heinrich, with all his young enthusiasm, could more ardently wish to turn back to the Fatherland than did his quiet father. But at the moment this summons arrived there were other thoughts, and very anxious ones, at work within the breast of Steinmark.

No father that loved as he loved Lotte could be insensible to the impression which she had made on the heart of Sigismund Hochland, and still less perhaps of that which the young man had made on hers. Though it was not in his nature to play the spy, and though he saw no more than every member of the family might, and indeed must have seen, he could not but observe how very nearly deaf and blind each seemed to be to all things in which the other was not concerned. Yet still no declaration of love was made by the baron, no hint given that the only hope which made life dear to him was that Lotte Steinmark might become his wife.

It was precisely at the period when the love between the two young hearts had become so evident that the least speculating in such matters must have expected "something would come of it," that the letter from the Baron Steinmark arrived; and then it was that the wits of the father and the lover fell into a series of speculations which caused many hours of misery to themselves and others.

No sooner were the hopes of the young Steinmarks that this letter would induce their father to return to Germany made known to Sigismond, than he determined to wait only till this intention was made known, and then boldly ask the hand of Lotte in marriage; while, on the other hand, Frederick Steinmark was painfully withheld from making the much-longed-for announcement to his family, from the fear lest the high-born and wealthy Baron Hochland might interpret this sudden compliance with a request, well known to have been often previously refused, to a wish of placing his slenderly-portioned daughter in a position more likely to obtain his alliance.

Never was a mutual misunderstanding more complete, and never was an *éclaircissement* more welcome.—Not that it was made with equal frankness on both sides; it was not necessary for the father of a pearl of such price as Lotte to confess that he had been anxiously waiting for the proposal now made for her, because the secret of her young heart had betrayed itself, and he had seen that all her earthly happiness depended upon it. This was not necessary, and it was not done. But quite enough of the real truth was made manifest on all sides to render the hours of that day among the happiest of their lives.

And then burst forth all their long-hoarded thoughts of home. Those who had kept this strangely strong instinct hidden at the very bottom of their searts, now uttered hymns of thanksgiving and of joy. Mary, indeed, was not a German, but she was an European, and Germany was to her a most dear home. As for the pensive Henrich, his very nature seemed suddenly to have undergone a change; he outdid Karl in noisy gaiety, and notwithstanding all the necessary business to be performed on that memorable day, he would permit no member of the family to take a share in it till they had once more assembled themselves round Sigismond while he again sang that familiar air which had caused so sad a revulsion of feeling among them in the strawberry-field.

Poor Karl indeed turned almost with a sorrowing eye towards his prosperous mill. "Shall I stay and grind out some more dollars, father, before I turn gentleman again, and rejoin you all in our glorious Fatherland?" said he, half jestingly and half in earnest.

"No, that shall you not, my son," replied Frederick: "we have borne the labour and heat of the day together, and together will we enjoy the rest that is offered to us. But what says Fritz? He has not been a daily labourer, as we have—his prospect look almost too bright to leave without regret. What say you, Fritz?—Home and a light purse?—or Philadelphia and a heavy one?"

"I beg to preface my answer," replied the young merchant, "by declaring that I am as good a German as any of ye. Nevertheless, having swallowed up so much of your hardily-earned transatlantic

wealth, dear father, in becoming what I now am, I will not, if the choice be left me, leave the country till I can bring with me the means of living independently out of it. If the affairs of Wilcox, Steinmark and Co. continue to prosper as well as they do at present, I may hope, unless some griping fit of avarice seizes on me, to come and turn my dollars into thalers before many years are over.—But where's Lottchen? I must positively be off before sunrise to-morrow; and if she does not make haste, I shall have nothing ready."

But Lottchen was not just then to be found. In truth, she was at that identical moment walking very slowly, and with no symptoms of the hurry that the business of the hour called for, with young Sigismund at her side, beneath the shelter of a row of locust-trees at the farthest part of the garden.

The happiness of Hermann upon the events of this day was perhaps not less profound, though less demonstrative, than that of the rest. His mind was like a clear lake that bears on its sympathetic bosom the colours of the objects that Nature has placed around it; and as these become bright or dim by the influence of the varying heavens, such were their strongly-marked effects on him. First among these kindred forms for ever reflected on his affectionate breast, was that of his father. The quiet boy, while learning from him, in common with the rest, such lore as an accomplished gentleman will almost inevitably communicate to his children, whether chance has placed him in a palace or a hut, the quiet Hermann, though nowise deficient in all such studies as occupied Lotte and his brothers, had in addition a separate and a secret study of his own,—namely, the character of his loved and venerated father. The result of this was a degree of devoted attachment by no means common in any of the relations of life. But the boy had not blundered—Frederick Steinmark deserved it all.

It was therefore the deep-seated, delicious satisfaction which beamed from his father's calm but expressive eye as he looked on the beloved beings he was at length allowed to make so very happy, that now found its answering perfection of contentment in Hermann's heart.

* * * *

Never certainly could their new "help" Cæsar have found a more inconvenient day to ask for a holiday than the one he had chosen; but they all seemed too busy to remember it. When, however, in consequence of the well-inspired remonstrance of Phebe, the active and intelligent lad once more appeared amongst them, his appearance was hailed by a very general and approving acclamation; and "Cæsar, run there," and "Cæsar, come here," and "Cæsar, do this," and "Cæsar, do that," assailed him on all sides.

But he proved himself good at need, and with a happy smile that displayed his white teeth from ear to ear, and less blundering activity

than ever negro showed before, he literally contrived to do all their biddings without mistaking one.

It was in obedience to one of these numerous behests, that he ran off with the swiftness of a stag to Whitlaw's multifarious store, to procure cord and canvass, and sundry other packing necessities, for the final completion of Fritz's preparations; and just as he reached the door, young Whitlaw and his friend Mr. Smith passed before it, on their way to meet their horses, which a negro was leading round from the stable. They both knew him in an instant, and stood silently watching him at the door of the store till he had done his errand. A few words were then exchanged between them, the result of which was, that the negro was ordered to walk the horses about, while the two gentlemen paid a visit to our friend Clio.

CHAPTER XLII.

WHEN Jonathan Jefferson arrived with his friend at Mount Etna about four hours before the moment our narrative has reached, he had the satisfaction of finding his stepmother exceedingly well dressed, and the best keeping room wearing an air of even more gentility and elegance than usual, as the lady had just enjoyed the satisfaction of showing off her house, herself, and her slaves to one of her relations, who had been kind enough to afford her an opportunity for this display by coming to dine with her.

Luckily they were but just departed; so Mrs. Whitlaw had not had time to order the "nigger gals" to take off their shoes and stockings and clean aprons, nor to lay aside her own magnificent cap with three full-blown roses in the front of it.

Old Whitlaw was, as usual, at the Eagle, and the faithful Clio in the store; so the young man was upon the whole very well satisfied with the aspect which "Mr. Whitlaw's place at Mount Etna" presented to his friend. That this effect might not be injured by the ill-timed introduction of his labour-stained aunt, his usual salutation of "Where's Aunt Cli?" was changed for the much more civil address of—"Good evening, mother. This is my friend, Mr. Smith of Cottenlands, one of the finest plantations near Natchez after the colonel's; and a friend he is of his too, and much respected, so please to make him welcome."

"To be sure I will, Jonathan; and I'm right-down glad to see him, I'm sure. 'Tis always a treat to us country ladies, Mr. Smith, when we are so happy as to get a visit from you town gentlemen. But you'll

take a drink, Jonathan, won't you, you and Mr. Smith too? I'm sure you must be dry enough riding such sultry weather as this."

The offer was accepted, and a "drink" of the usual refreshing kind was set before them, consisting of three parts whisky and one water, cooled, however, with a very commendable lump of ice, and flavoured with sugar and a leaf or two of green mint: a mixture, by the way, which, when the spirituous part is less nauseous and about one-eighth in quantity, is far from disagreeable under a Louisianian sun.

While stretching their limbs in various graceful attitudes under the shade of Mrs. Whitlaw's portico, and sipping their mint julap as sedulously as if their only motive in coming into the country was to enjoy themselves, they began to question her respecting the family at Reichland, and particularly as to any knowledge she might have of a certain Mr. Bligh, who was "remarkable intimate with um."

Now the truth was, that Mrs. Whitlaw had never seen Mr. Bligh, or even remembered to have heard his name before: but there are some people who never hear a question asked in a tone that seems to indicate mystery and mischief, without choosing to appear acquainted with the matter; and of such was Mrs. Whitlaw. "Bligh!" she repeated; "oh, to be sure, I know him well enough."

"You do, ma'am?" said Mr. Smith eagerly: that's well. Then you know, of course, that he's on the saintly lay? You never happened to hear him preach yourself, did you, Mrs. Whitlaw?"

"I am not that sure, Mr. Smith," replied the lady, who began to feel puzzled how to answer; "but the fact is, that he being a friend of the Reichland people, he can't fail to be altogether dispisable in my eyes, for there's nothing about 'em from end to end but what I hate and detest."

A great many very pithy questions were then asked, and a great many unmeaning answers given; but Whitlaw contrived that one fact at least should be established in the mind of his friend,—namely, that slavery was an abomination in the eyes of the Steinmarks, and that they were never known to omit an opportunity of showing grace and favour to a negro whenever they could find an occasion to do so.

This was something, and Jonathan Jefferson felt that if he could set his father on the scent, it might lead to more. But to do this to advantage, he felt that it would be advisable to see him alone, as a few hints might be necessary which would not greatly add to the value of the testimony he sought, even in the eyes of his liberal and well-judging friend Mr. Smith. He therefore privately decided to ride over alone on the following morning for this purpose; and meanwhile he took an opportunity, while his respected stepmother was expatiating on the sins and detestabilities of the Steinmark race, to slip out in order to have a word with Aunt Cli. From her he knew that he should at any rate

learn the truth in a moment, and be able to ascertain, without more ado, whether the people called Bligh were known to the Steinmarks or not.

Some moments were inevitably wasted by the unconquerable raptures of the good Clio at the unexpected sight of her nephew; and coffee was weighed amiss, and soap was cut awry, while she gazed with delight at his ever-improving elegance, now seen for the first time since his return from New Orleans.

But if the spirit of Jonathan Jefferson was chafed by this very unnecessary delay, he found some atonement for it in the succinct brevity which she answered his questions, as soon as he could find an opportunity to put them.

"Do you know a man called Bligh, Aunt Clio?"

"Yes, Jonathan dear; he has been twice in the store with the family from Reichland, and three times he has bought coffee here for himself."

"Has he got a siste r?"

"I don't know, Jonathan."

"Is he a parson?"

"I expect not, for he wears a white jacket."

"Is he a saint, Aunt Clio?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, Jonathan."

"Then you know noth'ing about him?"

"No more than I have told you, my darling."

"Well, Aunt Clio, good b'ye; but mind, don't show yourself, for I've got a first-rate planter with me, and he musn't hear such a figure as you Jonathaning and dearing me up. Good-b'ye—keep close—we shall be off in a jiffy."

With this tender farewell he departed, and was followed by a shower of blessings from the humble-minded Clio, who had neither pride nor vanity excepting for him, and who would willingly at any time have crept into the coalhole, and remained there patiently till he bade her come out again, could she have spared him a feeling of mortification thereby, and that without ever thinking it possible that the moral nature of the request might be defective.

The sight of Caesar however, the very identical slave who had made the appointment, drove even from the mind of the vain and cautious Whitlaw every lesser thought; and no sooner had he left the store, than he led Smith into it, saying with abrupt and forgetful eagerness, "Aunt Clio, whose slave is that?"

"He's owned by Master Steinmark, Jona—; I mean, he's Mr. Steinmark's slave, sir."

"Mr. Steinmark's slave? Why, what's in the wind now? I thought the Steinmarks were known to have said over and over that they never would own a slave?"

"And that's true too, Jona—sir. This young man is the first and the only one they ever bought."

The two gentlemen exchanged very meaning glances.

"They bought him, did they?" pursued Whittlaw. "Who did they buy him off?"

"'Tis a curious kind thing of 'em, if all's true as is said about it," answered the innocent Clio, who would not for anything—no, not even to please her darling Jonathan, have uttered a word that could have been injurious to the Steinmarks: "curious kind, and just like 'em; for you see he was a runaway slave from New Orleans, and 'twas just for that very reason and no other that Master Steinmark bought him,—at least that's what the old German shepherd said here one day, and I expect it's no more than the truth; and a curious sight of money he gave for him too; and now, you see, he's safe and out of all mischief, and may snap his fingers, mayn't he, at his old master?"

"That's coming to the point anyhow, I expect—eh, Smith?" was Whittlaw's remark as he left the store.

"Plain as a pike-staff," answered his friend. "If we can't do something here, 'twill be queer. I say, Whittlaw, who's that old woman in the store? What was it you called her?"

"The old woman? Oh, that's my father's old—My eye! now I think of it, Smith, what a glorious job it will be if we can make this story out to be true, and catch the whole batch of 'em preaching and praying, with the niggers beside, won't it?"

"I expect it will, Mr. Whittlaw. But above all things we must get hold of Hogstow: he's the man to make the most of it. God grant he may be back from New Orleans to-morrow, or we shall be stumpt after all."

"Not we, Mr. Smith, not we. I wish Hogstow back, that's a fact, 'cause he's first-rate at giving the white people a notion of what they ought to be doing; but it don't follow that we'll be stumpt, even if the Sabbath comes round without him. Why the thing lies in a nut-shell, and I guess that without Lynch-law at all we could carry it through, Mr. Smith, and bring these devilish Germans to the grindstone every nose of 'em, and that by regular State-law and nothing else."

Mr. Smith replied to this by laying his forefinger on his lip, and nodding his head with much occult meaning.

"You be careful, my young friend, if you please, how you get upon that lay. It's all very well to speak of State-law when needs must, and to make a talkification in Congress about our respect for the laws, and our reverence for the laws, and our obedience to the constitution, and all that. This is all very well in the right place, and that's at Washington. Not that they seem over particular about the

matter there either ; but at any rate, trust me that out here, the nearer we can get to having the law and the gospel too in our own hands, the better it will be for us ; and, by G—d ! we'll have a try at it both ways at this Sabbath meeting, and that without troubling the State about it, my good friend."

To this spirited view of the case our hero willingly acceded, declaring himself ready and willing to go through fire and water in such a cause and with such a leader. At a short distance from the town they separated ; Whitlaw directing his horse to Paradise Plantation, where, as he well knew, he should find a well-pleased auditor in the colonel of all he had to communicate ; and Mr. Smith repairing to the residence of Hogstown, to ascertain if possible the time of his return, being anxious to go in company with this intelligent and able assistant to reconnoitre the spot described by Cæsar as the place of meeting for his interview with the fair Lucy, and, what was much more important, the place of rendezvous for her brother's preaching.

Whitlaw, as usual, found his patron disposed to welcome his return very cordially. The rich man, indeed, appeared every day to enjoy his own company less, and a severe attack of dyspepsia having confined him for some days to his own room, the presence of his confidential clerk was more than ever agreeable.

It happened, moreover, that the colonel also had news to communicate ; a circumstance which to one of his disposition is a real blessing if they are fortunate enough to find some one meet to receive it, but which becomes a positive torment if they do not.

Before Whitlaw had time to announce the very important intelligence that they had all but got a preacher in their clutches, Colonel Dart had set off at full speed to recount his own adventure.

"That d——d witch has been here again, Whitlaw. Upon my soul I don't know what to make of her. It would be nothing but downright stupid obstinacy to doubt that she knows a cursed deal more than she has any business to know, that's a fact : and if the devil does not help her to it, 'twould be hard to say who did."

Whitlaw, who remembered the meeting at New Orleans, was by no means disposed to dispute this opinion, and replied, "True enough, sir, true enough. Has she been telling you anything new?"

"Telling me ? Confound her ! she does nothing but puzzle and bother me with all her tellings : and yet there's no man in his senses, I expect, who would choose to send her off without minding her."

"To be sure, sir, there's no doubt of it. But what has she been saying ?" said Whitlaw eagerly, suspecting that she had probably been giving some mysterious hints of the approaching discovery.

"I have never yet had time since you came back from Orleans," replied the colonel, "to tell you of the queer game she played here

about a runaway slave from Oglevie's—and I must tell that another time now, for I've got—"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Whittlaw suddenly; "she knew of that too, did she?—and she brought word of it here?—It's positive clear, colonel, that woman must not be treated with disrespect—she knows all, and the devil puts her in our interest, that's a fact."

"Well, I expect so, Whittlaw. But now jest listen. She came to me to-day, and told me in so many words that I must accept an offer I should receive to-morrow morning from a farmer, a German, I think, a few miles off, for the purchase of a gal of mine;—by the way, Whittlaw, that very gal that you told me that comical flogging story about. Well, she says that this old German will offer to buy her, and that, let him offer what he will, I must accept it and let her go."

"Possible!" cried Whittlaw with much solemnity. "Whether 'tis a devil or an angel as sets her to work, sir, I won't pretend to say,—but the old witch is as true as steel to us; there's no misdoubting her—I see the whole plot as clear as the sun at noonday. Juno, you see, has contrived to get that rebel runaway into her clutches, as sure as ever cat did a mouse; and now, cunning old soul! she's for setting that Phebe, who no more dare disobey her than disobey you, as a watch and a spy over him and his master too. Egad! she is a witch, colonel, and a capital one too; and I'd not be the man to cross her, I promise you."

The conversation then proceeded in the most explicit and satisfactory manner possible; and it became clearly manifest to the comprehension of both gentlemen that they were in a fair way, by help of their inestimable ally Juno, of speedily putting a stop, in their own neighbourhood at least, to all the danger which threatened them from the wicked attempts of ill-disposed persons to "christianize and instruct the niggers."

CHAPTER XLIII.

Mrs. SHEPHERD was a better plotter in principle than in practice. No one could be more true, heart and soul, to a cause than was this lady to that which now occupied the attention of the American slaveholders. Though not greatly addicted to indifference respecting her gains, she would willingly have sacrificed many solid dollars, could she thereby have ensured the peaceable continuance of slavery in her native State for ever. But in critical circumstances, such as now occupied the active supporters of the system, it is not enough to ensure

success in the ticklish measures undertaken, that all those made acquainted with them should be faithful and true in their principles—they must also be cautious and prudent in their practice; and this Mrs. Shepherd was not.

Hardly had the two men left her store, than she yielded to the temptation that assailed her, and again summoning Miss Tomkins to fill her presiding chair there, walked into the room where all her "young ladies" were assembled, for the express purpose of bringing Lucy to shame and confusion by making known her horrible delinquency to her companions.

The poor girl was as usual assiduously at work, but with a countenance more cheerful than usual. Her own situation, indeed, was in nowise altered or mended; and notwithstanding the good-will she had won from nearly all her companions, and the real affection of the pretty creature whose room she shared, this was miserable and cheerless enough. But the happy prospects of Cæsar and Phebe delighted her, and a gentle smile was on her lip when the grim Mrs. Shepherd entered and thus addressed her:—

"So, miss!—you're grinning, are ye?—'Tis you, you unnatural abomination of a nigger-fancier, that I'm speaking to—you Bligh girl, you!—See to her audacious impudence!—if she doesn't look up right in my face! Keep off, ladies,—don't touch her, whatever you do. I am bound by my duty to those whose goodness takes care of us, not to turn the monster out of my house till all the hellish plot is ripe—or maybe she'd be giving notice, and some of those might escape as, thank God! are marked for destruction.—But though I'll take care to keep her close enough, there's no need, ladies, that you should any of you come within the touch of her."

The astonished Lucy through the whole of this speech continued to keep her eyes fixed on the speaker, as did also every other person in the room. Having paused for a moment to witness and watch the effect she had produced, Mrs. Shepherd lowered her voice, already hoarse with her vehemence, and addressing the lookers-on in a whining tone, she said—

"Don't you pity me, ladies?—Such a house as mine!—when did ever shame enter it before? And now will you credit and believe that two gentlemen of the first standing in Natchez have this day heard with their own ears a love-meeting made and settled between that horrid creature there, Lucy Bligh, and a beastly black nigger-man!"

"It is an infamous falsehood!" said Lucy, rising, and looking round her with eyes that seemed to appeal to her young companions for support under this insulting accusation; "a most wicked falsehood. Are there any here who believe it?"

"I am sure I don't, Miss Bligh," said three young voices in chorus.

"You don't?" cried Mrs. Shepherd in a rage. "Then come with me, ladies, all three of you, and I'll jest show you how I come by my knowledge of it,—and then say you don't believe it!"

Every soul in the room followed her out of it except poor Lucy, who now totally overpowered by the situation in which she found herself, dropped again upon her chair and wept bitterly. While the curious females were engaged in a careful and edifying examination of the very grating through the bars of which the horrible conversation had been overheard, the unhappy girl had time to recollect all the circumstances that had really occurred, and the very dangerous words which had passed between herself and Caesar—not, indeed, of the nature so vilely suspected, but sufficient, as she well knew, to expose her brother, as well as his helpless congregation, to great peril. She was rapidly arranging in her head the readiest means of giving Edward and the poor negroes notice that they must again suspend their meeting, when the female troop re-entered the room, the two seniors of the party fully convinced of her guilt, two or three others suspecting or fearing it, and those—even those whose hearts acquitted her, too much shocked and terrified by the nature of the accusation, and the strength of the evidence, to again venture upon raising their voices in her favour.

"And now, ladies," resumed the triumphant Mrs. Shepherd,— "now that you all see that I have said no more than I am able to prove, have the kindness to tell me, some of you, how the creature contrived to get out of your sight and into that lane to meet the nasty nigger fellow?"

"I can answer that," said her sallow deputy. "Don't you remember, ladies, how she got up, and walked out of the room in her impudent independent way, as much as to say, 'I care for nobody?' And don't you remember into the bargain, that it was the minute after that little toad Dido come in, nobody knows for why, for I'm positive sure nobody called her. And don't you all remember how she poked the tray with the water in amongst the work just close to Miss Bight? And how much will you lay, any of you, that the varmint didn't speak to her, and tell her that her blackamoore sweetheart was out there?"

"That's the way, was it?" cried Mrs. Shepherd in a perfect ecstasy of rage; "that's the way she has been corrupting my property, and bringing slave rebellion and insurrection into my very house! Call in the black viper, one of you: I'll see whether we can't tame her before worse comes of it."

The little trembling Dido was immediately brought before this dread tribunal, and the scene that followed cannot be dwelt upon. The strength of more than one active and practised female arm was exhausted in la-

cerating the back and limbs of the unfortunate child whose ill-timed good-nature had produced such terrible results. Lucy, who was as little used to such a spectacle as if she had been born and bred in that happy land where none for an instant can respire the breath of life and remain a slave,—poor Lucy, in the agony of her soul at this spectacle, not only attempted to interpose an ineffectual effort to prevent it, but uttered words of such indignant reprobation at the executions, as certainly convinced all present that she was in truth an enemy in that camp where slavery was held to be the sovereign good and sovereign safety.

“You hear her, ladies! Now do you all believe it? And is this a cretur to be left at liberty among slaves and niggers? Be very sure that we shouldn’t be long safe in our beds if this wasn’t looked to. I’ll send express for Mr. Smith and Mr. Hogstown outright, and they’ll say better than we can what ought to be done with her. She’s joined in a rebellion with ’em against the State, that’s clear at any rate; and I expect she’ll have to go to prison without delay.”

It was no terror for herself that drove the blood from the cheeks and lips of Lucy, and left her pale as marble. She had never moved any one to rebellion; no such act could be proved against her, and she feared it not. But if her brother were indeed discovered in the act of secretly addressing Louisianian slaves in the dead of night, his life might be the sacrifice, and no safety found in the pure and holy object that he had in view. She remained immovable while these thoughts pressed upon her, and answered not a word to the taunts, revilings, and threats with which she was assailed.

Meanwhile the messenger despatched for Messieurs Smith and Hogstown returned with the intelligence that the former “was rode into the country,” and the latter not yet returned from New Orleans. This message was delivered in full assembly, and Lucy was inexpressibly relieved: she flattered herself that before the following morning she might certainly escape from any power Mrs. Shepherd could employ to retain her, before she was authorised to use violence by those who had power to do so. But herein she greatly miscalculated that lady’s respect for the laws: no sooner was she informed that there would be difficulty in conveying Lucy to any other prison, than she determined her own house should serve all the purposes of one in the interval; and accordingly she ordered Lucy to mount the stairs before her.

Resistance was totally out of the question; *the deputy*, at a look from her chief, marched up to her side, and seizing her arm with no gentle touch, prepared to enforce the command.

Lucy shrunk from her touch, for she had been second only to Mrs. Shepherd in the violence used upon poor little Dido; and obeying the

peremptory command, she walked up stairs to the room she usually occupied, and having entered it, heard the door locked and double-locked upon her.

Her situation was indeed terrible, being made up of the most serious and well-grounded fears for the future, with inability the most lamentably complete of using the present interval to avert the threatened danger. She prayed fervently, and in doing so ceased to weep; but the hours wore heavily away, and though the light of day had not yet disappeared, she fancied the time already past when it should have done so. At length a step approached, and the door was opened. A portion of bread and water was placed beside her; while the poor girl who had hitherto shared her bed was permitted, though with many injunctions to make haste, to remove her night-linen and other necessities from the chamber. While engaged in collecting these, Lucy observed her go to a drawer that was appropriated wholly to her own use, and which she knew that Miss Talbot never opened; but now she did so, with rather more than necessary noise, as if hastily seeking some article that she had mislaid—and as she closed it again, a little short cough accompanied the action. It was enough: Lucy felt that she was not quite forsaken; and having waited till the door was again locked upon her, she hastened to the drawer, and, as she expected, found a scrap of written paper in it.

The rapidly fading light enabled her with some difficulty to read the following words, written in pencil:

“DEAREST MISS BLIGH,—

“You do not think that I believe a word of their wicked slander. I love you dearly, and trust I shall this night prove it. I am to be put to sleep in a small bed in Mrs. Shepherd’s room. She keeps the key of your door in her bag, and it will be odd if I can’t watch where she puts it when she goes to bed: so expect to hear your door open when it is quite dark. I shall not come in, for fear we should be heard; but I hope we shall meet again somewhere.

“Your affectionate,

E. TALBOT.”

With this ray of hope to cheer her, Lucy lay down upon the bed, certainly not to sleep, but for the purpose of keeping herself as tranquil and as much at rest as possible, in order to be the better prepared for the long walk through the forest which she hoped to perform before the morning.

She waited long in vain. One by one she heard the different doors close, till by degrees the whole house was hushed in the most profound stillness: but still her friend came not, and sick despair had almost taken the place of hope, when a noise so slight as left her almost in doubt whether it were not fancy, called her attention to the door.

For a moment she waited without moving, that if indeed it were

Miss Talbot's gentle hand which had produced the sound, she might have time to retreat again to her bed before she risked the danger of betraying her, in case she were herself discovered. When at length, however, she laid her trembling hand upon the lock, it yielded to her touch.

"Soft as a spirit's were her feet,"

as she stole down the lofty staircase. Believing her easiest exit would be by the kitchen, she directed her steps that way, and after a few puzzling and very tormenting difficulties, she at length found herself the same dark lane in which Cæsar had paid her his unfortunate visit the day before. Her first steps were taken very hastily, though in perfect ignorance as to the way they led; but then finding herself in the open market-place, she became conscious that she was really at liberty, and stood still for a moment to decide in what direction she should proceed.

The first nervous terror of her doubtful escape being over, she became conscious for the first time of two circumstances which were both, though in very different degrees, embarrassing. The first and most important was, that she doubted extremely of her power to find the footpath across the forest which led to her brother's dwelling. The minor evil was, that she had neither bonnet nor shawl to shelter her. The room she shared with Miss Talbot was so small, that these articles were deposited in a closet near the head of the stairs, the door of which she dared not open.

Had Lucy felt strength enough to have walked the long circuit that the waggon brought her, her road would have been easily found, for the track was plain and the stars were bright; but it was too far, and she felt certain that did she attempt it, the morning would find her exhausted and still far from home. To discover the footpath was therefore her only alternative, and she set about it with a light foot and a fervent spirit.

At first setting out, her progress was plain, easy, and hopeful; for so many dwellings hung upon the skirts of the town, that in no direction was there any difficulty of finding a well-trod path. With such slight knowledge of the stars as she had to help her, she took the direction of her home; and for a time she fancied she remembered the aspect of different objects which she had passed when Edward had come to the outskirts of the town on a Sunday morning, to meet, and conduct her through the wood. But there is nothing so deceptive and beguiling as a forest-path; it will puzzle and delude even during the brightest light of day, and, spite of the stars, might have puzzled Jean-Jacques himself, if their light came as faintly as it now did to poor Lucy, through the matted umbrage of trees that became thicker at every step

she took: yet still she walked actively onward, nor paused to think how many miles she had already trod, nor failed from time to time, as some small opening gave her power, to look up to the heavens and ascertain that she certainly was proceeding in the direction of Fox's clearing.

It was not till the light of morning began to steal palely and furtively athwart the forest, and the early twittering of the birds gave a less doubtful notice that the night was past, that our poor Lucy permitted herself to believe that she might in good earnest have lost her way, and that so completely as to leave her little hope of recovering it.

She had forgotten, in the hurry and agitation of that nervous walk, that the same creek which made it necessary for all waggons to go twelve miles round in order to pass it, was fordable to foot-passengers only at one other spot, where by descending a very sharp declivity, a point was reached, across which a tolerably active spring sufficed to bear the traveller in safety, and very nearly dry-shod: but this spot she now perceived she had missed, and again and again, after innumerable windings, the impassable creek yawned before her, as if to mock her idle efforts to master it.

Completely wearied and discouraged, she seated herself on the ground, both for the sake of rest and meditation. What should she do next? Not even the tangled thicket above her head could longer conceal the fact that it was broad sultry day, and she dreaded such a total failure of strength as might prevent her making any effectual effort to extricate herself before the return of night. She feared to sleep, and yet felt that this was in truth the only means she had of restoring the strength she so much wanted; so, after weighing deliberately the various perils that threatened her,—her decision, aided perhaps at last by the heavy weight that seemed to rest upon her eyelids, she cautiously selected the foot of a tree where no treacherous thicket might afford ambush to a snake, and tying a handkerchief over her head to guard "the portals of her ears," she commended herself to Heaven, and lying down, with her own fair arm for her pillow, was in a few moments fast asleep.

CHAPTER XLIV.

WHEN Mrs. Shepherd in her tender mercy ordered bread and water to be again served to the poor prisoner for her breakfast, the species of emotion which she experienced at hearing that she had taken wing may be easily enough imagined. She raved, she stormed, she ac-

cused everybody, and finally sent to summon Mr. Smith for the purpose of confessing to him that she was gone, together with the very mortifying addition that she neither knew how nor where.

Mr. Smith was in a tremendous passion. His favourite Hogstown had arrived during the night, and they had already enjoyed, over a breakfast of beefsteaks and onions, a foretaste of the happiness of getting up a little exhibition of Lynch-law of their own. To be balked in this by the stupid carelessness of a parcel of idiot women,—for it was thus he disrespectfully expressed himself,—was more than his temper could bear.

Happily for Mrs. Shepherd, her sensible fore-woman uttered a suggestion which occasioned an immediate revulsion of feeling in the heaving breast of Mr. Smith.

“Don’t you think, sir, that it is impossible she can have got far, and she such a delicate young thing, and that never have been used to them woods at all?”

The admirable judgment displayed by this observation acted instantly like oil upon troubled water.

“You’re no that stupid, miss, at any rate,” said he abruptly; and without waiting for any rejoinder to his compliment, he darted out of the house like an arrow.

Though greatly vexed to learn that the bird was flown, Mr. Hogstown acknowledged that it would be pretty considerable likely that they should fall in with the nigger-loving miss, seeing that few that didn’t know the ground well would be likely to find the crossing of Long-knee-deep creek. It was therefore immediately agreed between them, that they should set out on foot, and calling in their way at Paradise Plantation, get young Whitlaw to join them; after which, if they all started off in different paths, ’twould be queer if one or other of them did not come up with her, and she such a slip of a girl too.

On this reasoning they acted; and the consequence was, that Whitlaw reached the very spot where Lucy had fallen asleep about five minutes after she had again opened her fair eyes to the light. Had his joy at discovering her been less intemperate, it is probable that she would have been his to have and to hold, at least as a prisoner; but he uttered such a shout of savage triumph, that like a startled fawn she sprung away, and favoured by some thick underwood among which she threaded her way, he lost sight of her directly.

Uttering an oath, yet nevertheless but little discouraged by a flight that he knew could not carry her far, he followed the direction she had taken: but it was some time, owing to the nature of the ground before he caught sight of her again; and when he did, she was standing motionless, and appeared to be earnestly gazing at some object that

had arrested her steps, but what trees and bushes still prevented him from seeing.

His rapidly-advancing step made her turn her head, when once more darting forward, she was again hid from his view. His distance, however, from the place where she had been standing was very trifling—a few active bounds mastered it; and looking in the same direction through the trees that she had done, he saw her, equally to his surprise and mortification, surrounded by a party of armed Indians.

When Lucy had reached the spot from whence this wild group was visible, she started with very natural terror and dismay, for no figures could in truth be better calculated to inspire such feelings. Four long lank figures of the Choctaw tribe, well-armed, but with hardly more clothing than the wild animals of which they were in pursuit, were suddenly visible to her at the distance only of a few yards.

Their occupation was certainly that of peace, for they were cooking some of the game of which they had made prey; but there is an unspeakable look of savage wildness about this race, which, however little there may be now to dread from them, might well create a shudder, when encountered by a lonely female in the depths of a dark and gloomy forest.

Her first impulse was to retreat, and so silently as to remain unnoticed by them; a matter of no great difficulty at a moment when one great instinct of their nature was about to be satisfied by the meal they were preparing, and when another—the aptness to perceive and guard against approaching danger, once equally strong within them—was blunted, and in a great degree extinguished for ever, not so much by the careless boldness that assured security gives to civilization, as from the reckless indifference produced by having nothing more to lose.

Lucy stepped back; and if her garments moved the leaves around her, no Choctaw head was turned to see whence the movement came; but at the very moment that she joyfully perceived this to be the case, her own ear, more quick to catch alarm, made her conscious that Whitlaw was close upon her.

The terrible words, “I have got you, have I!” which he had shouted with noisy triumph when he first caught sight of her, left no doubt that he was in pursuit of her, and that if she fell into his hands, all hope of giving her brother timely warning would be lost. This recollection, and something too in the general appearance of the *civilized* man which terrified her even more than the painted and scarred features of the Indians, stopped short her retreat, and after a moment of trembling uncertainty, during which her heart beat as if it would have burst through her bosom, she rushed suddenly forward and threw

herself on her knees before one of the Choctaws, who being idly seated apart, she rightly judged to be their chief.

It was certainly no feeling of terror that startled the four savages as she thus suddenly appeared among them; or if it were, it must have been somewhat of a superstitious nature, for it really seemed as if her light and beautiful figure had risen from the earth beneath their feet, so totally without preparation of any kind was the apparition. For a moment, they looked at her and at each other as if awe-struck; but in the next, feelings of kindness and good-will evidently took place of all others, and with that look and manner which is of all the languages of the earth the most intelligible to woman, they made her feel that she was safe.

Comforted and reassured beyond her most sanguine hopes, yet still trembling, and with cheeks and lips as pale as death, she rose from her knees and endeavoured to make the men comprehend that she had fled from some enemy in the wood. She was perfectly understood, and four rifles of prodigious length were instantly handled in a very masterly and warlike style.

If Whitlaw remained long enough at the post he had reached to witness this manoeuvre, it is probable that he thought he had seen enough of Lucy for the present; for no farther sight or sound reached her to renew her alarm on his account.

The Choctaw chief, who read poor Lucy's languid and exhausted condition in her face as ably as if he had been the most skilful physician of New Orleans, pointed to the seat he had left, and made her a sign to take it: this she did thankfully, and with a smile that so plainly told him so, that no words could have expressed it better. He then drew from his belt a flask of that magic liquid which, far more than arts or arms either, had led to the subjugation of his own and all the other tribes that once strode over that gigantic continent as its lawful and its only masters;—in plain English, he offered Lucy a flask of rum.

Her first movement was to shake her head and refuse it; but the sinking faintness within, which led her to fear that even now, with her four savage but kindly guards around her, she might still be incapable of reaching her home before the light again failed, taught her better wisdom, and she put the rude bottle to her pretty mouth with the courageous resolution of swallowing what might be sufficient to revive her strength. But the experiment did not answer well, for the mouthful she took very nearly choked her; and neither their respect nor their pity could prevent a general laugh among her tawny friends at the effect it produced.

No animal, however, is so inventive as a man when his ingenuity

is set to work to aid the suffering and weakness of a woman. One of the party who was engaged in supplying wood to the fire over which some half-dozen rabbits hung roasting, started off among the trees, and returning in a few moments, addressed his companions, who each produced a flask, among which he disposed of the remaining contents of his own, and setting off again as he had done before, he speedily brought it back filled with such brackish water as he could get from some swampy hollow, and then contrived to blend it in such judicious proportion with the rum of another flask, that Lucy, albeit unused to such a beverage even in this tempered state, now swallowed a draught of it, greatly to the advantage of her powers both of mind and body.

Meanwhile the dangling rabbits reeked in savoury wreaths of very appetising smoke, and the hospitable savages again proved their powers of invention by twisting the bright leaves of a tulip-tree together, till such a pretty pattern of a basket-plate was formed as Mr. Wedgwood might have purchased at high cost. And then was a rabbit carved most manfully by three strokes of a hatchet, and the choicest morsel laid upon the plate of leaves, and an instrument, something between a knife and a dagger, put into Lucy's little hand, and the plate most reverently laid upon her knee, as she sat upon the species of throne allotted her; and in short, the timid, weary, harassed Lucy Bligh made a repast, surrounded by her four Choctaws, which many a pampered epicure, waiting for a lagging appetite that will not come, might have envied.

When the meal was ended, and the poor girl with renovated spirits had smiled her thanks to each, she began to labour with all her skill of signs and gestures to make them understand that there was still another service they must render her, even the guarding her through the forest till she had found the friend she sought.

This was, however, no easy task. She succeeded perfectly in making them comprehend that she still feared some one who had pursued her, and the long rifles were again handled, and each one pressed closer round her, as if to tell her that they would "buckler her against a million;" but when she strove to explain to them the way she wished to go, it was quite evident that they were all at fault.

The place at which she had found them was an old clearing that might have been formerly cultivated, but which appeared to have been long forsaken; no remnant of a fence, nor any other symptom of its being near a human residence, remained, and it was hopeless for her to attempt leading them with her in any direction, as it was quite as likely that she should go farther from Fox's clearing as that she should approach it.

At length, however, she succeeded in making them understand that

she wanted to pass the creek. One of its numerous windings brought it to a point which she had reached but a short distance from the place where she had slept; and remembering this, she walked towards it, beckoning them to follow her. They did so instantly; and having reached the steep side of the ravine, it was not difficult to make them comprehend that it was her wish to find herself on the other side of it. She flattered herself that the well-known familiarity of these people with every inch of forest-ground would enable them to lead her to the pass by which the footway from Natchez to many a forest dwelling led. But here she was disappointed. No sooner did the gentle savages discover that she desired to cross the creek, than they set to work to make the doing so easy for her, but never appeared to think that there could be the least difficulty in achieving this exactly at the spot where they stood. They rapidly wove together a hurdle of branches, and having made signs to her to lay herself upon it, which she fearlessly obeyed, two of them caught her up, and she was down one side, across the water, and up the other steep and rugged bank, almost before she was aware of what they were about. This certainly was a great and important assistance, as it was now just possible that she might set off in the right direction: and if she did so, there would be no longer the fear, or rather, the certainty of meeting this ever-yawning chasm to stop her progress.

But it was at least equally possible that she might set off wrong; and as the right was but one, and the wrong many, the probabilities were sadly against her. She now pronounced the names of various farms which were all in or near the direction in which she wished to go;—but, alas! her friends could only shake their heads and pronounce some very unintelligible words in return.

What to do she knew not. To remain thus strangely though safely accompanied, was impossible; and rather than do so without making some effort to extricate herself from her embarrassing position, she determined to walk straight on and take her chance as to whither the doing so might lead her. She wished, and indeed hoped, that, the friendly Chocktaws would accompany her, for the dread of Whitlaw, and of being again made a prisoner, haunted her; but she knew not how to make known either her purpose or her wishes, and therefore set off without attempting it, trusting wholly to their sense of her helpless and unprotected situation as an incitement to their continuing near her.

Nor was she deceived in thus trusting. The apparent chief of the party placed himself at a few paces before, one of the others kept at a similar distance behind, and the other two flanked her right and left, taking care however, never to approach her so nearly as to lessen the appearance of respect with which they seemed desirous to treat her.

In this way they proceeded, whether right or wrong Lucy had still no means of judging, for about two miles, when the report of a rifle from among the trees, and very near them, caused the whole party to halt. A scout was immediately despatched in the direction from whence the noise proceeded, and the rest stilly and silently awaited his return. In less than ten minutes the man returned, followed by a hunter—or, to use the phrase of the country, a gunner—armed cap-à-pie for the chase. He was a fair young man, with bright curly locks, and light blue eyes, whose gay and good-humoured expression might have encouraged the most timid female to address him, even in circumstances of less desperate need than those which beset Lucy.

The young stranger exchanged a few words with the Indians in their own tongue, and then advancing cap in hand towards Lucy, begged to know if he could in any way assist her.

As briefly as possible she explained her situation, stating that she had lost her way in the forest, and encountered the party of Indians, who had shown the kindest inclination to befriend, but ineffectually as far as concerned her finding the road, for they could not understand her questions.

"Do you, sir," she continued, colouring and trembling with anxiety for his answer,—“do you chance to know a little farm called Fox's clearing?”

"Fox's clearing?" said the young man eagerly; "that is the residence of Mr. Bligh—is it not? I cannot be mistaken, your resemblance to him is most striking,—surely, you must be his sister?"

"Is it possible that you know my brother, sir?" replied the delighted Lucy. "Edward Bligh is indeed my brother. Are we near his home?—How very fortunate I am!"

"I am sure, Miss Bligh, I shall consider myself so, if I can be in any way useful to you," said Karl Steinmark; for it was his happy countenance, beaming with good-humour and benevolence, that the poor wanderer had had the extreme good fortune to encounter in this desolate region. "Tell me," he added, "what I can do to serve you?"

"You seem to speak these good men's language," replied Lucy. "Will you express to them, as strongly as you can, my sense of their great kindness: they have fed and guarded me as if I were a child of their own nation."

"Poor people!" said Karl mournfully; "their nature might have been better dealt with."

"And will you, sir, give this money?" she said, presenting her little purse: "I wish I had more to offer them."

Karl performed his part as ambassador and interpreter very gracefully, and, excepting in the matter of the purse, was most graciously

received and listened to; but respecting this the tawny heroes were inflexible, uttering, as with one voice, their refusal of payment.

"Have you anything about you, the most trifling thing in the world, by way of token and remembrance," said Karl, "that would delight them?—but you must not press payment upon them."

Lucy's hand was instantly in her pocket; and she drew thence a small silver knife, and a pair of very delicate scissors.

"Ay! these will delight them," said Karl.

"But here are but two things," said Lucy mournfully; "and I could not bear to leave two forgotten."

"I dare not offer to help you out," said Karl, smiling, "with any of my own pocket furniture, for I am quite sure that those who got my things would look with quite as jealous eyes upon those who got yours as if they were left unremembered entirely."

"Though they will not take money," said Lucy, rejoiced at the bright idea, "they will not perhaps refuse the purse, especially if you tell them that it was made by myself."

"Excellent!" cried Karl, "the very best thing possible: and suppose I make up the number with my powder-horn?"

Lucy again put her hand in her pocket, and drew thence all that remained in it; namely, her cambric handkerchief—and—her thimble.

No sooner had Karl thrown his eyes upon this last article, than he uttered an exclamation of delight. "My powder-horn!—a dozen powder-horns would not redeem this!—Now then, Miss Bligh, if you will make your offerings, I will attend you with the best explanation I can."

Lucy did so; and the grace and feeling she contrived to throw into the simple act of presenting to each the little token by which they were to remember her, almost caused her interpreter to forget the explanation he had promised to give. But an appealing look from her recalled him to his duty; and he performed it so well, that each and all of her honoured guard retired to follow their way as much gratified and as happy as she wished to make them.

The affair being thus satisfactorily adjusted, and Karl and the lady left alone, he renewed his inquiry of how he could be useful to her.

"Can you tell me the way to Fox's clearing?" she said, "or tell me even in what direction it lies?"

"I doubt if I could even do that," he replied, "for I have never been there; but if you will permit me, Miss Bligh, to lead you to my mother and sister, I can assure you a most cordial welcome, and much nearer rest and shelter than Fox's clearing. In fact, we are not more than a mile from Reichland, and your brother's home lies beyond it."

"Indeed I will go with you very thankfully," said Lucy, "for I doubt if I could walk many miles farther.—Your name is Steinmark, then, sir?" she added: "I thought it could be no other."

However fatiguing the mile appeared to Lucy, it certainly seemed no very long walk to Karl. The gentleness, intelligence, and refinement which he in common with all his family had remarked in Edward, with that sort of liking with which qualities highly prized and rarely met are requited, were all found, as he thought, more remarkably still in his sister, and without that settled sadness on the brow, which to a gay spirit like that of Karl was inexpressibly painful, often checking the kindness it longed to offer, from the fear of bringing annoyance instead of relief.

It was with something like a feeling of triumph from having found what would be so welcome to all, that Karl led his pale and exhausted companion into the common sitting-room at Reichland: but poor Lucy felt great embarrassment from becoming the object for so many eyes, kind though they were, to fix upon; and the more so, from the complicated length of narrative which she thought would be necessary to explain why it was that she had been found so strangely.

She knew not how fully her name was enough, if not to explain her present situation, at least to render all explanation unnecessary; she knew not that her dear Edward, though often silent and sad on other subjects, had warmed into eloquence and animation when she had become the subject; and still less did she imagine that the favourable impression thus made had been strengthened by the almost rapturous encomiums of Cæsar, who had managed since his residence among them to assure the family, one and all, that the whole wide world did not contain any one person so filled with virtues and good gifts of all sorts as his quondam mistress Miss Lucy Bligh.

Unconscious of all this, Lucy shrunk from the affectionate eyes that were fixed upon her; and having vainly endeavoured to tell the gentle Mary, who hung over her with maternal kindness, why it was that, with uncovered head and thus wholly unprotected, she with unwomanly boldness attempted to traverse the forest alone,—having attempted this, and failed from weakness of many kinds, she stopped short, and covering her face with her hands, burst into tears.

It was Lotte who now came forward, and gently drawing her mother aside, knelt down in the place where she had stood before Lucy. The young girl sympathised with the young girl's feelings; she understood her shyness—she felt for her fatigue, for her embarrassment, even for her dishabille, and whispered to her in the voice of confidence and affection,

"Come upstairs, dear Lucy!—come to my room, dear friend!—I know you will be better there."

Lucy knew it too, and pressing the hand that had taken hers, she rose, and accompanied her new friend as she led the way to a quiet, comfortable little room upstairs.

This was exactly the situation and the consolation that was most likely to restore her; and here it was that, without restraint or embarrassment of any kind, she related the whole of the circumstances which had befallen her, from Cæsar's unlucky visit, to the fortunate arrival of Karl Steinmark at the spot where he found her surrounded by her body of Chocklaw guards.

Lotte listened with the most earnest attention, and without saying a single word to interrupt her; but when the narrative was ended, she manifested the interest she took in it, by her anxiety immediately to consult her father as to what steps should be taken to secure the safety of Mr. Bligh.

Undress yourself, Lucy, and get into bed; I am sure your limbs must feel stiff and aching after such a night. You must have some coffee, and lie quite still for an hour or two; by that time your brother will be here, and then you shall come down and assist at the general consultation."

So saying, she gave her an affectionate kiss and left her.

The tale was listened to by all the party with indignation and anxiety. The state of the public mind through all the Southern states respecting the slave population, and the general acknowledgement of the necessity that the strongest measures should be resorted to in order to ensure the continued subjection of these unhappy people, was well known to Mr. Steinmark, who was watching the struggle between the two parties with the deepest interest: he saw at once that the violent detention of Lucy was for the purpose of preventing such a notice of the discovery of the prayer-meeting being conveyed to her brother as would prevent its taking place. The immediate danger was avoided by the noble exertions of Lucy; but it was so evident that young Bligh must now be a marked man, that Frederick Steinmark instantly determined to hasten his own departure for Europe, that he might convey both Edward and his sister from the country that their virtues had rendered so dangerous to them.

His first care was to summon Edward; and Hermann, who knew his abode from having on some former occasion accompanied him home, was despatched to Fox's clearing for this purpose; while a very joyful degree of activity was communicated to the rest of the family, by the information that all hands must set to work in order to prepare for departure by the earliest ship that should leave the port of New Orleans for Europe.

The sale of his highly-cultivated and very valuable property at Reichland he had already nearly settled with Colonel Dart, on whom,

with his usual good-nature, he had called the day before in order to negotiate the purchase of Phebe; and on mentioning to him, as one way of advertising the property for sale, that it was his intention to dispose of it previously to his setting off for Germany, that very wealthy gentleman declared himself ready to become the purchaser at such a valuation as three respectable persons competent to judge the value should put upon it.

Nothing, in fact, could be more agreeable to Colonel Dart than the opportunity of making this purchase. He had a much larger capital than he knew how to employ; and, moreover, was very sincerely rejoiced to find that a proprietor who cultivated his land by free labour was about to take himself away.

The happy Phebe, it was already settled, should come to them on the morrow, and, together with her intended husband, accompany them to Europe. The Baron Hochland declared himself perfectly ready to start at the same time, though complaining a little at the stern decision of the whole family, that Lotte should be bestowed on him in the presence of her uncle, and on the soil that gave her birth. In a word, all preliminaries for departure had already been so nearly arranged, that it was evident a little extra activity might enable them to proceed to New Orleans in the course of a week.

Never was the satisfaction of a whole household more general and complete than that of Frederick Steinmark upon this occasion. From Mary, who now prepared to change her usual mode of doing everything so quietly that her agency could sometimes be scarcely detected, into the bustling rapidity that seemed absolutely necessary to keep her *au courant du jour*, down to the German labourers who had accompanied them out, and now were right glad to accompany them back again, all was joy and thanksgiving: and affectionate as was the interest they had felt for Edward before they were fully aware of the perils which beset him, that interest now seemed increased tenfold, both by the perils themselves, and by that delightful feeling which in the heart of the good is more attaching perhaps than even the gratitude for benefits received—the consciousness of having bestowed them.

“We shall save him, poor fellow! and his pretty sister too, by this forced march,” exclaimed the father of the family with the most animated satisfaction; “and we shall moreover, carry away two other human beings, whom we found groaning in the chains of slavery, with no other fetters upon them than those of wedlock: and if we leave one dear son behind us to make spoil of a little barbaric gold or Yankee silver, we have found another to supply his place—have we not Lotte? Then will not the return of the exile to the land of his fathers be triumphant?”

He was answered by a chorus, and one which rung most sweetly on

his ear, for no single voice was out of tune as it pealed round the wide chamber,—“IT WILL!—IT WILL!”

“I wish Edward Bligh were here,” exclaimed Henrich: “I long to hear what he will say to it.”

CHAPTER XLV.

It was late in the evening when at length Hermann Steinmark returned, bringing Edward with him. He had found him very unwell, feverish, and out of spirits; and the kind-hearted lad's project of not telling him that his sister was at Reichland, in order to give him an agreeable surprise, was of necessity abandoned, as the invitation to accompany him was most decidedly though gratefully declined, and all other reasons tried in vain to overcome his reluctance to leaving home, till at last the baffled envoy was driven to explain,

“Why, Mr. Bligh!—your sister Lucy is at Reichland.”

“Lucy!—my sister Lucy at Reichland! What has happened to her, Mr. Hermann? Has she been ill treated?—Is she ill?”

“She has a very long and interesting story to tell you, Mr. Bligh,” replied Hermann, “and she is in a great hurry that you should come and hear it—so make haste and let us set off. And there's abundance of other news for you to hear too, and you will be interested in it all, Mr. Bligh. It is so long since we have seen you, that I don't believe you know that my father has decided upon returning home directly. But come, I will tell you all the news as we walk along.—I don't believe that you have ever been told yet that Lotchen is really going to be married to Sigismund.”

They were in the act of passing through the door as this was said: Hermann was a step before the unfortunate young man who thus received the confirmation of all he dreaded to hear.

No answer was returned; and young Steinmark walked on for a few paces, supposing that Edward was following; but receiving no reply to a question which he addressed to him, he turned round, and to his surprise found himself alone.

He retraced his steps, and again entered the little sitting-room. Edward was not there however; and supposing he was gone to communicate some wish or order to the other inhabitants of the dwelling, Hermann sat down to await his return. In about half an hour his step was heard descending the ladder-stair from the rooms above, and the next moment he appeared.

Young Steinmark was most painfully shocked and surprised by his appearance. His face was utterly colourless, his eyes had an expression of unsettled restlessness, and his whole manner was nervous and agitated to a degree, that it was embarrassing to watch, but impossible to overlook.

"You are ill, Mr. Bligh!" said Hermann, rising and taking his hand; "I am sure you are feverish, and it is better you should not go out to-night;—let me tell your sister that you will come to her to-morrow."

"No, Hermann, no," replied Edward in an accent of decided resolution; "if my orphan-sister were only to be reached by passing through a furnace seven times heated, still I would go to her. Excuse this delay—it was not to be avoided: but let us set off now—we shall soon be there."

They did set off accordingly, but it was in vain that Hermann endeavoured to beguile the way by conversation. He talked of Cæsar, of Phebe, of the Old World and of the New, but all fell unheeded upon the dull ear of Edward; and if any thing could have brought sorrow to the happy heart of the young German, this silent melancholy walk must have done it. But after being quite convinced that it was not without great reluctance that his companion uttered even the monosyllables "yes" and "no," he desisted from the attempt, and consoled himself as well as he could for his absence from the busy happiness at home by remembering how gratefully his father always seemed to acknowledge every attention paid by himself and his brothers to the melancholy Edward.

When at length they reached the happy parlour at Reichland, they found Lucy seated in the midst of the family circle looking almost as happy as any of them. Frederick Steinmark was himself seated next her on one side, and Lotte on the other; and long before Edward arrived they had made her acquainted with the plan already formed for screening herself and her brother from dangers and difficulties of all sorts, by adopting them into the bosom of their family and their country. "My little girl will be running away from her mother very soon," said Frederick; "and you, Lucy, are exactly the being to take her place: Edward shall become a minister of Luther's own church, and I will even give up our beloved Cæsar and his little wife Phebe to wait upon him."

The pale and wretched countenance of Edward most sadly checked the current of such gay talk as this, and immediately all that one short moment before had made her so very happy was as completely forgotten by Lucy as if it had never been spoken.

Lotte rose and resigned her place to Edward, which he took without seeming to know who had left it: but as he listened to the narrative of

his sister, and perceived by all she said, as well as by the remarks of Frederick Steinmark on it, that his position was become one of positive and immediate danger, his haggard countenance gradually resumed its usual expression, and even a smile revisited his lip as he sought to throw ridicule upon the terror his sister expressed concerning him.

"Your devotion to the needle, Lucy," said he, "seems to have lowered your courage most lamentably. You are a sort of heroine, you know, and stand pledged to endure evil report and good report without shrinking from the cause to which we have devoted ourselves."

"As to the good or evil report to be obtained from the slave-holders of Natchez, Edward, I suspect that our newly-found Lucy cares for it quite as little as the rest of us : but for the matter of martyrdom, it is another thing, and——"

"You are quite right, quite right," said Edward, suddenly changing his tone ; "Lucy must have nothing to do with that—nor need she with such friends as you are."

"And with a brother to boot," observed Steinmark, "who certainly thinks vastly more of her than of himself. But, if you please, my dear friend, we will dispense with the honours of martyrdom altogether : we have settled all your plans for you, Edward, and this distinction makes no part of them. Lucy is to be the adopted daughter of my wife, and to take the place of Lotte when Sigismond runs away with her, as he threatens to do ; and you, Edward are to——"

"Pray for you with my latest breath!" exclaimed Bligh, clasping his hands fervently, and looking as if he would willingly fall at the feet of his benefactor.—"Will you indeed," he continued, "let this poor orphan be one of you?"

He took her trembling hand as he spoke and placed it in that of Steinmark.

"It is all settled, Bligh," replied Frederick, more affected than he chose to appear by the solemnity of Edward's words and manner : "but not your sister only—you also must be one of us. You have done all that you could do to benefit the unhappy victims of the sinful tyranny—you will have saved the valued servants of your father from the misery which threatened them, and you have sown the good seed of faith and hope in the minds of many whom we have neither of us the power to redeem, but who may bless your precepts and your name even when they see you no more."

"I trust in God that they may!" replied Edward : and then, as if to turn the conversation from himself, he added, "When, my dear sir, do you think of sailing for Europe?"

"Before you could well believe such a difficult undertaking possible," replied Steinmark. "Our preparations are already in great forwardness. My business with Colonel Dart respecting the sale of my farm and all that is on it will be completed to-morrow; and then, in truth, nothing remains but to lock our trunks and take our passage to New Orleans."

"Do you think you shall be gone before the next Sabbath?" said Edward eagerly.

"I hardly know; but I think my wife told me, that to prepare the linen for the voyage would keep us till Tuesday or Wednesday. Is it not so, Mary?"

Mary answered in the affirmative; adding, however, that if it were safer that Mr. Bligh should retreat before the day for which the forest meeting had been fixed, she thought his doing so might very easily be arranged, by leaving two of the servants to complete the work, and follow them a day or two later to New Orleans."

"Oh no!" said Edward, again assuming a cheerful aspect; "you quite mistake me. These people, if they purposed, as you suppose, to interrupt the meeting of the Sabbath night, will now be deterred from doing so by the escape of Lucy. They will think, of course, that we shall fear to hold the meeting."

"That is possible, certainly," replied Steinmark; "but it will not do to reckon on this too surely. In short, my dear fellow, I am clearly of opinion that the sooner you put yourself out of the way of them the better."

"I hope you think so too, Mr. Bligh?" said Lotte kindly.

Excepting at the moment of general salutation as he entered, these were the first words she had addressed to him, and their effect was very painful. He rose from his chair, and seemed preparing to approach her, and then sat down again without returning any answer; and then he rose again, saying, "Good night!—good night!" but had so evidently lost his self-possession, that Lucy, quite terrified, rose too, and, laying her hand on his arm, looked up into his face with so much uneasiness depicted on her own, that it restored his recollection in a moment; and with quiet but fond affection he kissed her cheek, saying,

"Will you indeed, kind friends, shelter this poor girl here for to-night? She does not look fit to set off upon another night-walk through the forest."

"You will never get your sister to Fox's clearing again, Mr. Bligh," said Mary, "do not think of it. During the short time that remains before we all set off together for the Old World, Lucy must be Lotte's bed-fellow."

"May the God of the Old World and the New bless you now and

for ever!" exclaimed Edward fervently: "my sister is no longer a houseless wanderer, a frail and friendless thing, that one blow might crush to the dust at once. You may know sorrow, my poor Lucy," he added, again kissing her, "but you can never know such hopeless desolation more, as we have passed through together: and when sorrow comes, you must bear it, Lucy, as a Christian woman should; but it will pass like a cloud of the spring, and your day of innocent life will be happy. Farewell!—farewell to all! I have not been very well of late, and ought not to be a late wanderer myself. Good night!"

"Do not go home to-night, Mr. Bligh," said Mary, in the cordial tone of genuine hospitality. "I am indeed sure that you are not well, and Lucy and the rest of us must nurse you. Fritz is gone, you know, and his bed shall be got ready for you immediately."

But there was something in this proposal which seemed to endanger anew the composure he had regained.

"Oh, no, no!" he cried, very hastily making his way towards the door. "You know not—it is quite impossible!" And even before Lucy could stop him for a last "good night!" he was gone.

Notwithstanding the deep and impressive gratitude which he had expressed for Lucy's amended prospects, and his evident satisfaction at everything which had been proposed concerning her, Edward's manner had left a painful impression on them all.

Lucy, as of late she had always done when Edward manifested emotions that she could not understand, believed that his mind had been overwrought, and that his fine intellect was shaken. This terrible idea checked all her new-sprung joy, and almost made her guilty in her own eyes, that, with such a terror before her, she could find pleasure or even consolation in anything. Frederick feared that he had still some too exalted and enthusiastic ideas upon the sacrifices he was called upon to make for the poor slaves who had been wont to listen to him, and the rest of the family sighed to think that the charming Lucy should have the happy cheerfulness of her disposition weighed upon by the melancholy temperament of her brother; but no one guessed that poor Edward carried an arrow in his heart that poisoned his life-blood, and made all the other misfortunes which had fallen upon him seem utterly harmless by the comparison.

"The mirth of the good meeting," however, was quite "displaced;" and after one or two vain efforts on the part of Karl and Sigismund to restore it, the circle broke up, and sought in sleep a respite from their busy joy, and an oblivion of the sorrow that had crossed it.

On the following day much important business was finally arranged. Phebe was transferred from the possession of Colonel Dart to that of Frederick Steinmark; and the estate of Reichland, with all the build-

ings, stock, farming implements, and household furniture upon it, was, within the same hour, conveyed from Frederick Steinmark to Colonel Dart.

The pretty wonder and delight of Phebe at learning, as she speedily did from Cæsar, that she was in a few days to be carried away to a land where negroes were never slaves, and that her darling Miss Lucy was to go there too, renewed through the whole house that spirit of light-hearted merriment which had reigned amongst them from the hour their departure for Fatherland had been announced.

Even Lucy, though conscious of a heavy sorrow that seemed ever to hang suspended over her, could not resist the influence of Phebe's raptures, and the infectious happiness seized upon her spirits, and made her laugh with a gaiety long a stranger to her feelings.

While all the junior part of the family were wasting their time by laughing at the sallies of Phebe, instead of soberly attending to the duties of packing, a sudden stop was put to their mirth by the entrance of Clio, who, in a state of great agitation, and out of breath from the speed she had made, desired to speak to them "all at once," 'cause the store was waiting for her, and sister Whitlaw would be mad.

"Sit down, Clio, at any rate," said her constant friend Lottie, settling a chair for her. "It will not take you at all more time to speak sitting than standing; and here we are all, quite ready to listen to you."

"All indeed!" said Clio, looking round her. "Why, what a sight of you there is altogether! And a black nigger gal too amongst you! So you're come to about the having niggers after all?—But that's not altogether what I come for: 'tis to warn you, dear good people, that you are—My Jonathan's been out to me this day, to give me warning of the most horriblest thing as ever my ears heard tell, and says 'tis you all as is in the biggest danger; for if you don't shut your doors against 'em, you'll have your house pulled down by the virtuous and enraged populace of Natchez, he says: and so, as in duty bound for all your kindness, I'm just run across to tell you."

Clio stopped for want of breath, and with her apron removed the abundant moisture which the rapidity of her course and the heat of the noon-day sun had produced. But great as her efforts had been, and eager as she certainly was to give them some very important information, there was not one of those who listened to her that had been able to comprehend the meaning of a single word she had uttered.

"What is it we have to fear, my good Clio?" said Frederick Steinmark, who had followed her into the room from the wish of saying farewell to the only one of his neighbours whom he greatly respected.

"What is it that is going to happen to us?—We have lived here very

safely for many years, and it will be strange indeed if at the moment of departure we are to be visited by the virtuous mob of Natchez. Do pray explain yourself, Clio."

"Ah! that's just what I don't dare to do if I could, Master Steinmark," replied Clio. "But, thank the Lord, I don't know how; and so I can do no mischief to the darling what trusted me. But this I will tell you for all your long kindness, that if you lets a certain dreadful bad woman darken your doors, you'll have mischief more than I *can* say, or dare."

"A dreadful bad woman, Clio!" exclaimed Karl, laughing: "what dreadful bad woman are we likely to have?"

"Why, the horrid unnatural monster, Master Karl, has been having a nigger sweetheart. Arn't that horrid?—And my Jonathan says that she's the sister of one that's unaccountable great friends with you all here, and one that I know summat of too. The Lord keep me from seeing any of 'em again!—but their name's Bligh."

On hearing this, Karl rose from his seat, and approached Lucy as if to comfort and sustain her under this dreadful attack; but to his great surprise she appeared not to feel any emotion beyond astonishment, and perhaps a little curiosity; for in truth it never occurred to her that such wild, unmeaning nonsense could really threaten danger.

"My name is Bligh," said Lucy very innocently, "and I have a brother who has been often here; so I have no doubt that I am the person you have heard mentioned. Besides, it is exactly the same thing that was said to me by some woman at Natchez, who saw me speaking to a negro that had brought a message to me; but I do assure you he was not my sweetheart."

Clio had started from the chair on which she was seated the instant Lucy proclaimed her name, and going up to Lotte, besought her in a whisper not to be beguiled into letting that bad woman bide with her; adding in a lower whisper still, "I dare not, Lotte, tell all!—my Jonathan would kill me. But all they want is to know that you and they hangs all together; and if they do find it out, Lotte,—why then we shall have Lynch-law at Reichland as sure as here you be. But never let my Jonathan know that I told you even so much as that."

Without waiting for a reply, Clio wrung her hand and disappeared.

Lotte immediately repeated to her father this threat of a visitation of Lynch-law; a species of outrage which they had often heard of, but without ever imagining that it could reach them, the quiet regularity of their manner of living being such as might well set all such attacks at defiance. And so were the young men inclined to treat it now, declaring that it was really to be regretted that their speedy departure was likely to prevent their seeing this singular administration

of justice with their own eyes. But Frederick, though probably not much more alarmed than themselves, treated the threat more seriously. "I assure you, boys," he said, "I am well pleased at having so promptly settled my business with Colonel Dart. I suppose you know that this gentleman is already in possession of my house and lands—yea, even of my chairs and tables, and that we are now only here by his especial grace and favour? But I really think it will be but prudent for us to depart with our friends as speedily as may be. My old shepherd has often told me that Whitlaw the father is not kindly disposed towards me; and now it seems that Whitlaw the son is ready to declare war likewise: and it certainly is by no means improbable that if there be a riotous movement at Natchez, the virtuous populace, as Clio calls them, may chance to turn their steps this way."

"Do you really think so, father?" said Lotte, looking very much frightened. "Then we must not mind the linen or the books or anything else, but get away as fast as possible."

"With all respect for the courage of these young gentlemen," said Steinmark, "I confess myself very much of the same opinion. A mob is a tremendous animal in any country, and I am not inclined to believe that it is at all better behaved here than elsewhere,—not to mention that they have unquestionably less reason to have the wholesome fear of the laws before their eyes than the mob of any other region on the face of the earth. THEREFORE, I do think, that as we have really nothing of any real importance to detain us, the wisest course will be to depart without waiting for the visit which these Lynch folks promise us."

"We are all ready enough to set off, father, give the word when you will," said Karl; "but I confess that I heard nothing from poor good Clio that occasioned me any feeling of alarm, though part of it certainly made me very angry."

"I think differently, Karl. Clio is desperately afraid of betraying the secrets of her nephew, and perhaps not very clear-headed on the subject of the threatened inroad; but I am quite sure she would not hazard the indignation of 'sister Whitlaw,' by running to warn us, as she called it, at this busy hour of the day, unless she knew there was some real cause of alarm. At any rate, we shall acquire no laurels by remaining; and therefore I decidedly vote for our adopting the safer part of valour on the present occasion. Besides, putting ourselves and Colonel Dart's house and furniture out of the question, I think our friends Edward and Lucy had much better be on board a steam-boat going to New Orleans as part of my family, than remaining here with nothing but their own goodness to protect them—which very goodness is in fact the real cause of all the ill-will they have excited."

The result of this conversation was the despatching Lucy and Phebe

to summon Edward with all speed to Reichland, for the purpose of arranging the manner of their immediate departure. It had been proposed in the first instance to send Cæsar on this embassy, but Lucy requested to be herself the messenger. She felt doubtful as to the *inclination* at least of Edward to retreat thus suddenly from the scene of his self-imposed labours ; and though she did not believe it possible that he would propose her going to Europe without him, still the idea haunted her that he had answered only to that part of the proposal which regarded herself, evading to speak of his own share in it altogether. Phebe accompanied her because she knew the way—and because she too had business in the forest of her own.

CHAPTER XLVI.

GREATLY were the destinies of these two young girls changed since last they walked together through the dark solitudes of that forest. They had then neither of them ever seen Reichland, and had no more hope or chance of being borne across the ocean to that other world which was thought of with a sense of vague mystery by the one, and the hopeless longing of an imprisoned spirit by the other, than the old trees that waved above their heads.

Now they were both anticipating this strange transition ; and though with widely different feelings, it was perhaps with equal delight. In both it seemed as if the sorrows that had too deeply stained their young lives were about to be quitted for ever ; and Phebe, in addition to the exquisite feeling of enjoyment which the prospect of novelty ever excites in the young, had the additional joy of knowing that she was about to leave her hereditary chain behind her—that her dear Cæsar would do so too—and what if possible is dearer still to the bosom of a female slave, she should not, if she gave birth to children, give them at the same time the galling yoke of eternal thralldom.

Yet, with all these happy thoughts, the actual feelings of both were far from gay. The white and the black girl had each a sorrow at her heart. Lucy feared for her brother, she hardly knew what danger or what suffering ; but she could not think of him as he had appeared the night before—so pale, so woe-begone—so tenderly anxious for her, so mournfully indifferent for himself, without feeling most sadly sure that his heart was not at peace within him, and that he nourished some hidden sorrow of even darker dye than those they had hitherto so equally shared together.

While surrounded by the happy Steinmarks, all of them seeming to forget their own separate causes of joy, in order to make common cause with her in the general delight of sailing forth upon the bright summer ocean, with sorrow behind and hope before them—while still in the midst of such a circle Lucy had no leisure to be sad. But now, with the faithful and sympathising Phebe by her side, the thoughts that she had felt it her duty to check in the happy circle at Reichland seemed to come back upon her with redoubled force, as if to avenge themselves, like Coriolanus, for having been banished.

Phebe, as she walked silently half a step behind her former mistress, felt her bosom heave and her eyes overflow as she remembered that she was going to see her mother and her little sisters for the last time. This natural sorrow, too, had not much to combat it as long as Phebe was within the influence of Cæsar and of Reichland; but the forest had not fully closed them round and hid them from the reproachful glances of kind eyes for many minutes before Lucy heard the deep sob of uncontrollable emotion from her companion.

She turned round, and affectionately taking her hand, said, in that voice of genuine feeling which heals sorrow more than the most reasonable consolation that was ever uttered, "My poor Phebe, I know why you are weeping—and weep you must, poor girl, and your good mother too, for the pang of separation must be terrible."

"Miss Lucy," said Phebe, trying to check her tears that she might speak intelligibly, "will you ask Master Edward for me whether it is a sin to go?—I sometimes think it must be.—How shall I bear to be so very happy and free too, and my husband free, and to know all the time that my poor mother is ever and always to be a slave, and flogged too, if that wicked Whittlaw, or any other of the white masters, choose to say it! And think, Miss Lucy, of the poor little girls too!—Sally is such a smart little thing!—suppose she should take the fancy of one of those sinful men, and I safe and free, and yet unable to help them!"

"It is a cruel thought, my poor Phebe," replied her pitying friend; "but you must remember, and Edward, I am sure, will tell you so, that were you to sacrifice your happy hopes and remain in slavery yourself for ever, you could not benefit them by it."

"But they would not have to think day by day of the shocking difference, Miss Lucy. And they would see me too, and that would comfort them."

"It would comfort them more, Phebe, to know that you were happy. And who knows but the time may come that you may help them? You and your husband will have wages—you have kind friends to help you, and who knows, Phebe, but that you may be one day able to purchase their freedom? Such things have been done, I

know ; and if ever I should earn money of my own, or Edward either, be sure we would help you in it."

"Oh, what words you speak now, Miss Lucy!" cried Phebe in an ecstasy. "Are such things ever done—and by poor blacks who have once been slaves themselves, Miss Lucy?"

"I have heard so, Phebe."

"Then there must be hope that we may do it: for had ever girl a husband that would do more for her?—or masters so kind and generous?—or a mother and two little sisters who had less black wickedness in them to be ashamed of?—And may I tell mother, Miss Lucy, that such a thing is possible?"

"You may tell her that I think so, Phebe; but that it must be the work of years and patience."

In talk such as this a mile or two was easily beguiled; and some time before Fox's clearing was in sight, Lucy saw her brother walking at a little distance under the trees beside the path.

"There is Edward!" she exclaimed joyfully: "how lucky that we did not miss him!—Now, Phebe, you had better hasten on to your poor mother. Tell her that if possible I will see her before I go; but I cannot promise it, for we must not be seen with the slaves: and tell her too that I shall never forget her long and faithful service—and that if such power should be ever mine, I will redeem her and her little girls from bondage."

With such cheering words as these to carry with her, Phebe no longer feared to meet her mother, and with restored spirits continued her walk towards the laundry hut; while Lucy left the path to join her brother, who had not yet perceived her.

In a few minutes, however, the noise she made in approaching roused him from his deep reverie, and he raised his head and saw her. It was with a smile of affectionate pleasure that he hastened forward to meet her; and Lucy was so cheered by it, that she almost forgot her gloomy forebodings, and spoke to him of their immediate departure with joy and gladness.

The sound seemed uncongenial to his spirits, for he turned away his head and sighed heavily; but in the next moment, making an effort to conquer his ill-timed gloom, he himself resumed the subject, saying, "Do you think, Lucy, they will be able to go before Sunday?"

"Oh yes, I think so! Almost everything will be ready by Friday evening, and on Saturday Mr. Steinmark's light waggon will set off at four o'clock in the morning to take us all. We shall get to Natchez, they say, about eight; and at nine or ten a steam-boat is expected to be at the wharf for New Orleans. Does it not seem like a dream, dearest Edward, that after all our misery—yes, and at the very moment when it was worse than ever—we, you and I, dear Edward,

who have so often talked of Europe till our hearts were sick with longing for it, should thus set off to visit it?—Is not this like a dream—a most delicious dream?”

“A dream, indeed!—And the waking, Lucy? Are you not afraid?—do you not feel it possible that disappointment may await you?”

“That I may not find everything so fine as I suppose it, Edward?—do you mean that? It is very possible, certainly. My thoughts do gallop, I know, when hope and fancy drive them. But, at least, Edward, we shall see no slavery; we shall hear no hymns of freedom, that ‘keep promise to the ear, and break it to the sense;’ nor shall we ever again, I trust, be where the Word of God is doled out to men of one complexion, but declared contraband and illegal to those of another.”

“These are goodly and godly hopes, my Lucy,” answered Edward with a smile, “and may you find them all realized. But, my poor girl, you must long remain, I fear, under a heavy load of debt to our kind friends: I have never neglected our school, Lucy, but I have not one quarter enough, I fear, to pay your passage to Europe.”

“Why do you talk of *my* debt and *my* passage, Edward? Why do you not say *our*, as you used to do of all that concerned us?”

“My dear, dear sister!” began Edward with ominous solemnity, “how shall I answer you? That every day you live you become dearer to me is most simply true; and yet I am obliged to act almost as if I loved you not. Lucy, my duty is here.”

“Then so is mine too, Edward!” cried Lucy, interrupting him. “Where you dwell, there will I dwell also!”

Edward Bligh wept like a woman, and for a minute neither of them spoke; but he restrained himself, and assuming a tone of composure very foreign to his feelings, said, “Did you know, my beloved Lucy, how grievously you torture me—could you guess how greatly you increase the load of sorrow which it has pleased Heaven that I should bear, you would not say so.”

“What would you have me say?” replied the suffering girl. “Would you have me tell you, that if you will not go with me, I will go without you? Would you have me say, that such is my love for friends of yesterday, that I am ready for their sakes to leave you, Edward—leave you for ever!—Oh, do not ask it of me!”

“I value as I ought the love that makes you speak thus, Lucy. I know your holy and most pure sincerity; but I must pay a dreadful price for it, if it must make me struggle against my conscience, my wishes, and my will, to prove myself not ungrateful.”

“Do not speak so harshly—oh, do not, Edward! It cannot be from your heart, I know it is not; and you only take this cruel tone to drive me to what you think will make my happiness. Now let us make a

compromise. I will not again ask *you* to try new scenes for which you have no relish, and you must not ask *me* to leave you.—Agreed!" she added, holding out her hand with a smile; "is it not agreed, Edward?—And now let us never talk of seeing Europe more."

The voice that uttered this had not a trace of affectation in it, nor had the heart that conceived it. Pure and holy, as her unhappy brother said, was the sincerity of Lucy Bligh; but her words were only the more painful to Edward from his knowing their truth so well: for alas! her love could not heal the sorrow—the hopeless melancholy that weighed him to the dust. It was not his wild, fervent, unrequited love for Lotte Steinmark which had made him thus; nor was it the loss of fortune, of station, and of friends; nor yet the remembrance, though it was ever vividly before him, of his noble-minded liberal father dying in abject poverty; nor the blighted prospects of his innocent, lovely, and loving sister; nor the visible worthlessness of his own abortive efforts to aid the wretched people for whose benefit he would willingly have sacrificed his life: but it was all these together, pressing upon a nature too sensitive to bear the slightest item of the list without sinking under it, and too disinterested in its exalted affections to permit itself the consolation of expressing its misery, or asking from the few who loved him the sympathy it would have been almost oppressive to him to find.

There was no healthfulness in this state of mind; nor was it in the power of any human being to heal it. It was perhaps the consciousness of this which made the true devotion of poor Lucy seem of so little value. Take from him his hopeless love, which had seemed to seize upon his senses as if to fulfil the destiny which doomed him to taste of every mortal pang, and her history was as full of woe as his own. But though she had bent before it at times almost as despairingly as he himself had done, there was an elastic spirit within her which rose at the first touch of hope, and a trusting tenderness of heart which made the balm of affection sink into her soul, without the alloy of any fear lest it might harm the giver.

A silence of some minutes followed Lucy's offer of compromise, and then her brother answered it by warmly expressing the gratitude he felt for her affection. "There must be a compromise between us, Lucy," he added, "but not quite of the important nature that you propose: it shall not involve the going or not going to Europe, but only the day of departure from hence. As it concerns myself, I must stay here till after Sunday, Lucy; but do not, if I agree to follow you to New Orleans afterwards—do not put me in the embarrassing position of making our kind friends alter the day of their departure. They cannot, you know, expect to find a vessel ready to sail the moment they arrive there, and I shall have quite time enough to join them."

"Very well, Edward,—I agree to this willingly; and if you make this short delay the only condition you annex to going with us, think you that I will not do so joyfully? The Steinmark family then shall set off Saturday morning, as they propose. He has sold the place and everything belonging to it, you see, to Colonel Dart; and having already received payment, he is anxious to lessen the obligation of remaining in it as much as possible. You and I can follow on Monday, by one of the same vehicles as that which conveyed me the first time to Natchez."

"No, Lucy, that is not part of your agreement. You must go on Saturday with them, and I will follow alone."

Lucy Bligh would have found it very difficult to explain the effect these words produced on her; for she would hardly have ventured to say, that, simple as they were, they rung on her ear like the hoarse warning of evil. What indeed could she fear? The principles of Edward were far too sincere and too deeply religious to justify the idea that any thought of self-destruction had taken possession of him; yet why should he wish for this unmeaning and solitary delay? She had not courage to ask him, but recovering from the sort of shudder which ran over her limbs as he spoke, she answered cheerfully,

"Very well, Edward; I dare say the family will arrange all that very easily—they are too kind to make unnecessary difficulties. And now, shall we not return to Reichland together?"

"I am not fit for society to-day, Lucy: perhaps I shall see you to-morrow."

"May I not stay with you, Edward? I fear you are unwell,—and indeed I do not like to leave you."

"Well then, my love, you shall stay with me," said Edward, embracing her; "and for the two days which will intervene before your departure, I own I should prefer your staying here. I know it is a sacrifice; but I will not scruple to accept it from you, Lucy."

"That is my own dear Edward again!" cried the affectionate girl, really and truly delighted at the arrangement, which nevertheless took her from a very happy scene. Phebe, with traces of many "natural tears" upon her heavy eyelids, called at Fox's clearing on her way back, and took Lucy's message, which was to say, that her brother not being quite well, she had settled to remain with him till Friday, when, if he were better, she would walk over to Reichland and settle about the manner of their going.

In delivering this message, Phebe had not failed to mention that Master Edward looked very sad, and seemed almost to wish that Miss Lucy would leave him quite alone again.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE first touch of the nearest Choctaw's finger upon his rifle had sent Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw back into the forest with a rapidity that might almost rival that of the ball which he more than half expected to hear whistling after him.

As he drew near Natchez on his return from his unprofitable expedition, he descried Hogstown and Smith, who had already met and joined their lamentations on the escape of Lucy. He hailed them, and communicated the disagreeable intelligence that he had seen the runaway, but in a situation that precluded the possibility of taking her; and a chorus of maledictions was uttered by the trio upon the infamous license granted to the savages which permitted them to carry arms.

It was now clear that the young preacher of whom they were so anxious to make prey would receive such timely warning from his sister, as would naturally prevent his assembling his black congregation on the following Sunday.

"You may say that," said Smith to Whitlaw; in answer to this observation: "he'll be too cunning to show his nose out on that night, at any rate."

"I dubiate a bit about that," observed Hogstown; "I don't say that it isn't likely neither; but I haven't forgotten my talk with the chap in the market-place here. He's as quiet as you will, and could stand still a spell, and hear, but say nothing; but he'd that in his eye that says '*try me*;' and if that slip of a lad has made up his mind to pray on the Sabbath night with the niggers, on the Sabbath night with the niggers he'll pray."

"What, when he knows that we shall be down upon him with Lynch-law, and State-law, and all the laws in the land?" responded Smith incredulously.

"Why, you jest see," said Hogstown, "what a near heat it will be 'twixt his wit and our wit. We think he won't be there, 'cause he'll expect we'll nab him; and he'll think, maybe, that we won't be there, 'cause we know that he'll expect us. So 'tis jest the turn of a hair which way's most likeliest to be right."

"That's what 'tis to be Yankee," retorted Smith, laughing. "We Southerners should take a long spell to think, before we came over it so fine as that. However, Hogstown, 'twouldn't do, my man, to rouse up Lynch-law for nothing. Your guess may be right, or your guess

may be wrong; and if we was to rouse our Natchez-under-hill men to do their duty upon the canter, and lead them out at dead of night into the forest, when they'd rather be amusing themselves elsewhere, and then let 'em find nothing but you and I and the trees, t'would never answer. They'd get no reward from none of the planters that always behave handsome when work's been done; and, maybe, we should find it d——n difficult to bring 'em together again; and if they're cold on the job, we're stumped outright."

"Mr. Smith, sir, you're a gentleman as deserves to be listened to, if you spoke from July to eternity. What you say is worth a dollar a word, and cheap too. But I expect, sir, we might take a middle course—neither altogether neglecting our duty and giving the varment a chance of herding together, the black beetles, without being cotched, and yet not weakening our effective for nothing, as the general would say, by bringing 'em out, when we are not that sure there'll be any work to do. I guess, gentlemen, that we ought so to conduct, as to avoid both the one damage and the t'other."

"You're first-rate, Hogstown, by G—d! And how is it to be done, eh?"

"Why it's not that difficult neither, I should say, Mr. Smith, begging your pardon if I differ. My judgment would be for one, two, three, or more of us as have got the business at heart, and would be ready to watch for a spell without hope of fee or reward, but for the alone love of the cause;—I say some few such as that ought by rights to rest themselves, with a cigar in their mouth for comfort, jest at that spot, Mr. Smith, that you heard the black fellow map out to his miss. 'Tis easy enough hiding in such a place and such an hour; and so we might see and hear all, and bear witness of something, if something there is; and if not, why we can but go back as we came, and no harm done."

"He's right, Smith," said Whitlaw; "that's the way to fix 'em. And there's another reason still, I can tell ye, why it wouldn't do to come down upon 'em at the meeting with the Lynchers; and I'll tell you what it is in no time. Them Steinmarks *won't* be there, as we ought to make an example of,—and the niggers *will*, whose lives must be looked after for lucre, if not for love. So let us mark down our preacher, and then follow him, the day after maybe, to the German's, where I expect they're all likely enough to be found flocking together like birds of a feather as they are; and then would be the time to let fly at 'em. My old colonel intends to higgie a little, I guess, with the Dutch fellow about his estate; and a capital bit it is, and we'll get a bargain after all, depend upon it. But 'tis plain to me that if we don't look sharp, Mr. Smith, we shall lose our example, for they're all taking fright, you see, and will be off together in no time. I haven't been

able to see my colonel for a minute at a time these two days; but I shall charge him to have nothing to do with the house, and then our folks may have license to burn, rob, slay, or what they will; and my father will take care that we shall know when they're to start."

"Well, gentlemen," said Mr. Smith, "it is clear that we can't be in better hands. Private and public feelings seem to unite to excite your zeal; and I can only say, that as I own three hundred and ten niggers myself, I expect you have no reason to doubt of my willingness to help.—Perhaps, Mr. Whitlaw, it might be as well to have a few handbills prepared, to stick about at Natchez—under—hill;—'tis as well that the mind of the people should be prepared."

"'Tis you, Hogstown, as must do that, I expect," observed Whitlaw; "and we'd better meet at Sanders's to-morrow night, and get a bit of supper together in a private room; and then we can have a look at your handbills, Hogstown, and settle, maybe, finally what's to be done Sunday night. I expect I may be able myself to pick up something among our own gangs that may be useful; and if I do, I can make it known to you then and there."

This proposal was agreed to, and the triumvirate separated.

Whitlaw's first care, as in duty bound, was to visit the colonel; and as he had inquired for him before starting in pursuit of Lucy, and been told that he was in a pretty comfortable fix in his arm-chair, and that the doctor expected he was better, he was a good deal startled when the black valet told him that "massa was roaring mad wid gripes," and that "God-A'mighty only knowed what to do wid him, for the doctor was stumped."

Whitlaw hastened to his room, where he found him in bed, and in truth in a very deplorable condition. Inflammation had taken place, and a mortification was expected to follow; but no one had yet been there of sufficient courage to tell the dying man of his danger. No sooner was Whitlaw informed of it, however, than his active and intelligent spirit suggested to him what was proper to be done. His first care was to summon a lawyer, whom he deposited snugly in one of the sitting-rooms, with plumcake, iced water, and whisky, wherewith to amuse himself. He next procured the attendance of two white overseers, who, if wanted, could write their names; and having placed them in another room with a bottle of rum and a couple of glasses, he returned to the suffering colonel.

The physician was with him, and after the examination of a few minutes, attended Whitlaw into another room.

"It's all over with the colonel, I expect, doctor?" said Whitlaw with very proper solemnity.

"I calculate he can't last the day, sir," was the reply; "or at any rate he'll never see the morning light again, Mr. Whitlaw. These

complaints, sir, go a pace in this country that mostly beats time, set it as short as you will."

"But I guess, doctor, that he won't keep on this fashion to the last? He'll come to, a little, won't he, and be more reasonable-like before he goes?"

"I calculate that it's possible he may, Mr. Whitlaw; and so, sir, if there is any business to be done, which is your meaning, I expect, I advocate your watching without much relaxity of attention. When you catch him quiet for a spell, get him to swallow a mouthful of rum, and repeat the dose as you see he wants it, till such time as he may be left in peace without inconvenience.—Good day, Mr. Whitlaw, sir,—I'll look in again as I ride back;—my cab is waiting for me, I expect, and I've got to ride as far as Mount Zion."

Whitlaw looked at the patient, and saw that as yet he was anything but quiet; he therefore ventured to retire for a few moments to refresh himself, and then returned to the sick chamber, attended by one negro, carrying rum and a small glass, and another with all the implements necessary for writing. Thus prepared, the confidential clerk seated himself where he could watch the sick man without being seen by him; for the appeals of the poor sufferer to every one within reach for the succour which no one could give, was an annoyance to which even the philosophy of my hero could not render him entirely insensible.

This very anxious attendance continued for about two hours without any visible change in the condition of the colonel; but at the end of that time his complainings began to cease, and he gradually sank into silence, and something approaching apathy.

Whitlaw drew near and contrived to make him swallow the prescribed cordial. The dying man opened his eyes and attempted to speak to him. It was evident he knew him, but equally evident that he had not strength to articulate. The confidential clerk poured out another glass of rum, and the patient again submitted to the dose, and with excellent effect, for in a minute or two he half raised himself in the bed and said quite distinctly—

"Where the devil have you been, Whitlaw?"

"Engaged in your service, my dear sir," replied the young man, arranging the bedclothes and the pillow with an air of affectionate assiduity; "engaged in a way that will, I trust, spare you all farther trouble on the score of insurrection, or any thing of that kind."

"That's well, Whitlaw.—And I wanted to tell you about my purchase.—I've got it all, and paid down ready-money too; but it's a capital purchase, and will turn out un-ac-count-a-ble pro-fit-a-ble."

The last words being pronounced with considerable languor, and even difficulty, a third glass of rum was presented, which was this time

taken eagerly by the colonel, and its effect immediately made manifest by so active an attempt at renewing the conversation, that Whitlaw deemed it prudent to check so idle a waste of very precious breath, saying—"My dear Colonel, I'm not altogether easy about you—though now you're out of pain there's good hope that all will go right; only your strength must be kept up by cordials, the doctor says, and you kept quiet, except as to any matter of business that you may have to fix."

"Business, Whitlaw? How the devil can I be doing business? Not but I feel elegant easy too; but I expect I should be as weak as a sick puppy if I were to stir. What business do you think I could do? I couldn't keep my eyes open for two minutes together, to see a nigger flogged, if he'd been caught at insurrection before my face."

"No, no, my dear sir,—no such sort of business as that; that your faithful friends can do for you; but no man can be sick, Colonel Dart, without wishing to settle his affairs, I expect."

"Settle?—what?—make my will, d'ye mean? Why the devil should I make my will?—I'm not going to die, Whitlaw, am I?"

"Heaven forbid, my dearest colonel, that at such a moment as this the country should lose you! Never were such principles and your influence so much wanted!—But Dr. Thomas says, that though the appearances are very particularly favourable at present, there is just enough possibility of a relapse—though no probability of it,—but just, as he says, enough possibility to make it advisable, if in case the law wouldn't dispose of your property just as you would have it go—to make it advisable for you to leave it your own way instead."

The sick man groaned heavily and answered not a word.

The rum-bottle, ever close at hand, was again seized, and again was the dram administered to the dying colonel.

"Am I dying, Whitlaw?" said he solemnly, and as if rousing all his strength to hear the answer.

"My dear colonel, no," replied the anxious sycophant; "but the doctor says he knows you've no reason to love your nephew overmuch, and so he thought that it might help to make you quiet and easy, perhaps, if you knew for certain that he'd never get what he never helped to make."

"My nephew?—where is my nephew?" said the colonel with very alarming incoherence.

"Thank God, sir, he is not near you, nor likely to be. What was it he said you was like, sir, the last time you had him here? Don't you remember my overhearing him joking with one of the nigger-girls about you?"

"Don't I?" cried the colonel, starting up in bed, rum and rage uniting to rouse the expiring lamp. "I expect I do, Whitlaw. You

heard him say to that wench that he knew I'd a fancy for, that I was like a blighted tomato, getting rotten before it was ripe,—wasn't that it? Curse me if ever I forget it!"

"Yes, those were the words, my-dear colonel: and yet that's the man that will have every cent of your property, estates, slaves, money and all, if any unexpected accident should happen to you before you've made a will."

"I'll be d—d if he shall!" exclaimed the stammering colonel. "Send for a lawyer, d'ye hear, Whittlaw? Never mind giving me more rum now—I expect I've had enough; and 'tis your own work you'll be doing, I guess, if you bring me a lawyer."

The lawyer was instantly summoned to the room, and the two overseers ordered to be in waiting on the outside of it. By the time this was done, the colonel appeared sleepy, and so greatly inclined to repose himself that Whittlaw feared lest the prize so nearly within his grasp should even yet escape him. It was with difficulty that the inspiring cordial was now forced within his lips; but by the help of something approaching to gentle violence this was effected, and sufficient life resulted from it to enable him to pronounce the words, "I give all I die possessed of, freehold, leasehold, and personal, to Jonathan Jefferson Whittlaw, for his sole use and benefit." Hardly were the words uttered, than the two men who were to witness the signature were brought in. The lawyer, who saw that he should never be paid for the will if he delayed to complete it, wrote the enormous bequest with all technical correctness and with a flying pen. Whittlaw raised his patron in his arms; the document was laid before him, the pen put into his clammy fingers, another spoonful of rum forced into his mouth, and the name of George Washington Dart scrawled in nearly illegible characters upon the paper. In another moment it was duly witnessed; and the next, my hero stood, the richest man in Louisiana, before the ghastly corpse of his benefactor.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

It was certainly a proof either of a very strong mind, or of a very strong feeling of hatred, that this vast change in the condition of Whittlaw did not make him forget the object he had in view for Sunday night. Neither did he in the slightest degree neglect the means by which he hoped to ensure his success. Before this important event happened to him he had decided upon consulting Juno, and his purpose remained unal-

tered, though, instead of a pitiful clerk with a salary of five hundred dollars a year, he would now stand before her, not only as her legal master and owner, but as the legal master and owner also of five hundred of her fellows, and of all the load of wealth which they had most of them passed their lives in augmenting.

Such news as this flies fast ; and when the new great man entered at daybreak the hovel of the old woman, she already knew that he was her master.

Considering the feelings that rankled in her heart against him, it might have been supposed that this intelligence would have been rather painful than pleasing to her. But, for some reason or other, it was not so ; and it was with joy as sincere as that which swelled his own bosom that she congratulated him on his great change of fortune.

" I thought it would please you, Juno," said he, with infinite condescension ; " because it was your own prophecy. Don't you remember, Juno, jest before I set off for New Orleans, what you put it all in rhymes about my flying high ?"

" I remember every word of it, master," replied Juno ; " and I'm glad it's all likely to come true so soon, or maybe I should not live to see it."

" Oh ! you'll see more yet, old woman—here's money for the good luck your words brought with 'em, and now tell me how soon I shall get into the senate—that is, after I've done sat my time in congress ?"

Juno fixed her eyes upon the ground for a moment, and perhaps was trying to string into doggerel rhyme, as she was wont to do, the words she intended to utter ; but if so, she probably found the gift had left her, and that she must conjure fools into her circle by other means, for after some short delay she shook her head and replied,

" I will tell you the day and the hour in one week from this day.—But this I will tell you, now : Master of all though you be, your fortune, such as I saw it when I spoke my prophecy, is not yet all come to pass—but it shall !—and THEN you will again remember the words of Juno !"

The rich man smiled upon the miserable old woman with increased benignity, and said—

" Thankye, Juno—your word always brings luck, and now I want it on another point. You've given many hints, you know, to the poor colonel that's gone, that mischief was brewing among the slaves—and that's come true too, like everything else. Now you must know that I and some friends with me have found out in a curious way enough, that there's to be an unlawful praying and preaching with the black people in the forest on Sunday night ; and one as we've long had our eyes upon, as no friend to the cause of good order, and the pros-

perity of the State, Juno, is to be there stirring the poor ignorant souls up to rebellion. Now you're up to a thing or two, Juno, and you know that the best law to stop such work as that is Lynch-law, which does much and says little ; for all the palavering in the courts does more harm than good most times. However, we think that the chap Bligh, as the preacher's called, has had a hint of warning given him by a sister of his—has got a notion of what we're about, and I'm come now jest to ask your opinion whether Bligh will be at the place of meeting or not ;—'cause, you see, it wouldn't do to let any body rouse up the people and bring 'em out to the forest in the middle of the night, and then to balk 'em—would it?"

"No, master, no," replied the sibyl earnestly. "Do that, and trust old Juno, they'll never more obey at any word that you or yours could give. Have you any sure knowledge, master, that the black people do meet to pray?"

"Only what we heard a young nigger say to the gal, Bligh's sister."

"Then listen to Juno, master!—Trust no lips that tell you that, and trust no eyes but your own. Go yourself, with me alone to place you, to this place of meeting, if it can be found. There lie concealed and see all. Then you will know what slaves dare do this thing, and what do not ; and then all may meet with justice. For them, the master's will, and the master's hand will suffice ;—but for their leader ;—take care how you touch him in the midst of them!—Remember your wealth and greatness, and do not risk your own safety for the sake of seizing with difficulty and danger one that may be brought to public justice in the face of day. Mark your man, and when you know him, then set your avengers on him ;—but not, if you listen to Juno, not till after the next Sabbath night is gone and past."

Whitlaw did listen, and with almost devout attention, to every word she spoke ; and even after she ceased, waited a moment to be sure that she had finished. He then replied exactly as she wished and expected.

"I expect, Juno, that the wisest thing I can do is jest to take your advice. 'Twas you foretold my fortune ; and 'tis you, I guess, as can best show me how to keep it. So, instead of joining with them as have no such good friends as you to counsel them, I'll tell 'em that the colonel's death prevents my seeing them ; and that as for the meeting, I shall have means to tell 'em more about it after next Sabbath. That's what I'll do, Juno,—and I expect that's what you approve?"

Juno assured him that if he acted thus, he would act wisely, and not only in conformity with her wish, but with the wishes of all those, whether inhabitants of earth, or air, or heaven, who watched over his destiny with the same care that she did.

"And what must I say to Hogstown and Smith?" said the rich man, looking rather puzzled, "if they find out that after putting them off, I went to the forest by myself?"

"They will never find it out," said Juno.

"But I don't see how I'm to help telling them, if I find Bligh there. For 'tis Hogstown above all that's to do the business at Natchez-under-hill among the white people, to set 'em on at Steinmark's. Juno, I hate them people as I hate the devil, and I must have their house burnt over their heads before they start."

"Must you have their house burnt down, master?" said Juno in a tone of much reverence.

"Why, to tell you the truth, my mind is more set upon that, I think, than even catching the parson."

"And when they're jest ready to start," said the old woman, chuckling, "with all their goods done packed, you will put them in an unhandsome fix, sure enough, master."

Whitlaw laughed too, and replied with the most familiar jocoseness, "That's a fact; and it's a pleasure I don't mean to lose, Juno, for it's long since I've owed 'em a grudge, I promise ye."

"The colonel bought the place, I'm told," said Juno, "just before he died."

"And that's true," replied the heir; "but not the house. I heard him say, poor man, the last talk of business we got together, that the Dutchman must get another chapman for his house and furniture, for he wanted nothing but the land."

"It would be a pity that you should not see it burning!" said Juno, who happened to know perfectly well, though he did not, that it was his own property;—"but it will be difficult to contrive about the time.—It will be too late after the Sabbath night;—you'd neither feel pain nor pleasure about it then."

"And why not, I wonder?—What makes you say that, Juno?"

The old woman started, as if roused from a reverie in which she had inadvertently thought aloud; but immediately recovering herself, she replied, with perfect self-possession, "I mean, master, that I know well enough, that when great gentlefolks get a whim into their head, if it is not done off at once, they will not care a cent about it afterwards."

"I know what you're thinking of, Juno," said Whitlaw, again laughing heartily: "you're thinking of my whim about Phebe, and how I clean forgot it when I come back from Orlines, after you'd taken all that trouble about it too. But this is another sort of whim, I promise ye, and it will keep hot longer than Sunday next."

"Well, master, you are the lord of all now, and you've only got to hold up your finger and jest speak a word, and you will find people

enough always ready to do your pleasure, and that without any help from Hogstown."

"I expect you're not that far wrong there, Juno; money does give a man a d——n sight of power,—and so I expect I'll jest be still a spell, as you would have me, and see what will happen after."

This important consultation ended, the proprietor of Paradise Plantation returned to his mansion for the especial purpose of issuing orders respecting the funeral of his predecessor.

As soon as he was gone, Juno set out upon an expedition upon which she had meditated incessantly since her return from her fatal visit to New Orleans. It was already night, and though a southern summer's night is rarely very dark, there was less light in the atmosphere than usual. Juno's step too was less firm and assured than it was wont to be. Age, which, though it had long marked her aspect with the appearance of more than ordinary decrepitude, had hitherto seemed to have touched her strength both of mind and body but lightly, had at last fallen heavily upon her. Her movement was slow and painful, the wild vivacity of her rapid eye was dimmed and quenched, and Juno had little now beside peculiar ugliness to distinguish her from any other negress of fourscore.

The task she was about to execute led her to several widely-separated points of the extensive grounds; and the old bamboo that had hitherto served her so well in many ways was hardly stout enough to support the weight she threw upon it, as she stumbled along over the rough paths she had to tread.

At length she reached the dwelling of one of the men who, together with his family, had been among the most zealous of Edward's negro congregation. The inhabitants of the hut were sunk in sleep when the old woman raised the latch and entered; but such visits from her were not unusual, and the weary negro uttered no complainings as she forced him to shake off the heavy sleep that clung to him, by telling him that she was come to say that to which no negro must turn an unwilling ear.

"And what be that, mother?" said poor Titus, yawning.

"Titus!" she replied, while the most violent emotion shook her trembling frame,—"Titus! the hour is come! That wretch, that dog, that Whittlaw—he who has taken accursed wages for the wanton shedding of your innocent blood—he who has made your heavy chain a thousand times more heavy still, who has made your tears his sport and your torture his pastime,—that man is now your master."

"I know it, mother!—we all know it; and what then? we hab more lashes and more work to look for, mother; but you do no good to wake me up to talk ob it."

"Titus, if you are a man, you will not let this villain live! Now

is the time to take him—now is the appointed hour; now, when his riches and his glories hang thick upon him—now tear him up root and branch, and throw him to the wolves and foxes, that are his kindred.”

“O Lor! O Lor! Juno,—what monstrous wickedness is that you say! Is we not Christians, Juno? and what would our Massa Edward say if we did such a deed as that?”

“It is to save your master Edward's life that you must do it. The wretch has pledged himself within this hour to shed the blood of that your best and only friend—and will you let him live?”

“Shed the blood of Massa Edward, Juno? No, no, he hab no power to do that, for God will come to help him.”

“Impious and profane!” cried Juno, once more inspired by the strength of passion—“you shrink from the task yourself, and dare call on God to help you!—He has helped you by my means,—he has given me power to tell you of the treason this wretch meditates against the spotless saint who has taught you to know his name,—and now you will see him butchered in cold blood before your eyes, rather than raise your coward arm to help him!”

“No, Juno, no,—we will not see it: and if you will only bring our Massa Edward to bid us do this thing, why then we'll do it, Juno.”

Baffled and disappointed where she had hoped for aid, Juno in bitter anger left the hut of the negro Christian, and sought to use her influence upon another. Her success was no better. Poor Edward, could he have that night witnessed how well these simple people had “learned Christ,” would have felt repaid for all his sufferings!

The whole night wore away in these fruitless efforts to neutralize the effect of a faith so welcome and so healing to the hearts of those who suffer; and the weary, miserable Juno crawled back to her distant shelter just as the overseers were driving their gangs to the fields.

“It must be poison then,—poison by my own hand mixed and ministered. There will be comfort in that, but it may not be so easy,—first, I must get the drug from Natchez.—It shall be henbane, accursed henbane,—it is thus they poison dogs—a fitting death for him!”

But her mind was not clear; and though her purpose and her will were desperate, she had lost that quiet, cunning mastery of herself, which hitherto insured her success in nearly everything she undertook.

We must leave her meditating on her fixed purpose, and turning in her wild and wondering brain the means by which she might hope to effect it, while we return to Reichland to see a little how their packing proceeded, and whether they were likely to depart for New Orleans at the appointed time.

When Phebe returned, and instead of Lucy, delivered to the family the message she had sent, a very considerable degree of gloom seemed

to fall upon the spirits of the whole family. Frederick himself was decidedly not the least disturbed by it. He made Phebe repeat more than once her very graphic description of Edward, both when they first watched him taking his sad and solitary promenade under the trees, and when she had finally left him, with Lucy seated by his side at their cottage door, looking "as settled and as quiet as if she had never left her home."

"Dear excellent creature!" cried Steinmark with enthusiasm—"that indeed is 'a woman that a man might love to lead round the world with him,'—a second Mary. Poor thing! she did seem so very happy here! To-day I think we must leave them quietly together—they have been sorely tried, and, as I believe often happens, the woman has shown more passive courage than the man. To-morrow I will go myself and see if I cannot win our melancholy Jaques into our circle. So now again to business, children. Who has remembered the dried plants? I must not have them left—nor my fossils either, heavy and cumbrous though they be."

Karl was decidedly fidgetty through the whole day, and more than once asked his father if he did not think it very likely that "his melancholy Jaques" would refuse to accompany them after all.

Now this was exactly what Frederick did think: he had remarked so much high-wrought and romantic independence of feeling in Edward, such almost morbid dread of incurring obligation, and such an abandonment of all that the world calls pleasure, that the idea of his finally refusing to go to Europe, because he had not the means of paying his own and his sister's expenses, perpetually recurred to him. What made this idea the more painful to him was the very strong suspicion he entertained that his situation, and that of poor Lucy too, was full of danger. Insult had already been heaped upon him, and judging from what had happened elsewhere, it was highly probable that injury would follow.

With these feelings he set off upon his benevolent expedition the following day, determined not to let any idle ceremony or want of open speaking on his own part interfere with the object he had in view. Karl was very desirous of accompanying him; but the gentle philosopher remained firm in his refusal, being determined, if needful, to use a tone of remonstrance with the too sensitive Edward; which the presence of another might render unnecessarily painful.

CHAPTER XLIX.

SEATED exactly as Phebe had left them, Lucy plying her needle, and Edward with a volume in his hand, which, however, he read not—she talking with that subdued cheerfulness which hoped to animate yet feared to wound her melancholy brother; and he, listening as a man might do who fondly loved the speaker, but had no share in the subject of which she conversed;—it was thus that Frederick Steinmark, having skilfully and successfully followed Phebe's instructions as to the route he should take, found the pair he sought.

Lucy uttered an exclamation of joy, and sprang forward to meet him. Edward coloured with a feeling which, if he could have dispassionately and with perfect reason weighed and judged his actions, might have taught him to doubt their wisdom at least, if not their purity. If thus withdrawing himself from the friendly hand that sought to save him, and separating with a violence that threatened to destroy them both, the destinies of his orphan sister from his own—if these things had been wholly good and wholly wise, Edward Bligh would not have blushed as the mild eye of Frederick Steinmark rested on him.

Edward did not,—alas! he could not, reason thus himself; but his friend did, and a smile that spoke hope of success over feelings of which the amiable owner was visibly ashamed lighted up his countenance as he sat down between the brother and sister.

“Edward, you know what I am come for—I see that in your face, so one portion of my discourse may be spared;—and I see, too, that you would not be very sorry were I to spare you the remainder also; but this I cannot do—unless, indeed, you will lay down your arms at once, and consent to march out of your garrison with all the honours of war?”

“Do not, my kind friend, seek to draw me from this humble shelter now. You know not—you cannot know the deep and solemn thoughts which are at work within me. It is my duty to listen to them, and I even doubt whether—having, through your goodness, the power of giving her a better home—I am not wrong in letting my sister—though she alone of the whole world can faintly and distantly comprehend a part of what passes in my heart,—I doubt, Mr. Steinmark, if I am not wrong even in letting Lucy stay with me.”

“You are indeed!—and I rejoice to find that on that point you now seem able to reason justly, Edward: I only wish that you had strength of mind and firmness of character sufficient to enable you to act accordingly. But this, my poor friend, it is evident you have not, or

you would not suffer this dear girl, who, though she has not yet counted twenty years, has tasted more real sorrow than is usually awarded to the innocent as their mortal burden for a whole life;—you would not in that case, Edward, suffer her to turn from the warm affection of a family, who are able and willing to protect and cherish her, back to the misery and desolation that it is your capricious and diseased taste to prefer.”

It might be difficult to say whether Edward or Lucy were the most astonished at this address. Yet their feelings upon it were wholly different. Lucy believed in the sincerity and humility of her heart that the flattering welcome she had met at Reichland proceeded from no claims of her own upon their kindness or good liking, but solely from the love and reverence which they bore to her unfortunate but admirable brother. In addition, however, to the astonishment which arose from the individual affection expressed for herself, she was at least equally surprised at the tone of strong though friendly censure assumed by Mr. Steinmark in speaking of Edward's distaste for all society, and his melancholy clinging to the sadness that had crushed him. There was no mixture of selfishness in the anxiety with which she watched the effect of this on his countenance, nor in the hope that fluttered at her heart as she at length read there an ingenuous acknowledgment that his monitor was right.

The first emotion, indeed, which this address produced on Edward was, like that of his sister, extreme surprise. He was fully aware of having inspired a most benevolent and kindly feeling in the generous heart of Frederick Steinmark, but till now had no idea that he held such a place there as should inspire the paternal interest which this strong reproof manifested. The manner in which this reproof affected him—the grateful, and even the gratified emotion with which he listened to words apparently so harsh, showed plainly what the generous nature was, which sorrow and over-wrought enthusiasm had so sadly marred.

“My dear and most true friend!” exclaimed Edward, rising from his seat and taking the extended hand of Steinmark, “you have indeed conquered me, and, with the exception of one trifling wilfulness that still clings to my heart, I promise to do all that you would have me.”

“Then you are indeed the man I thought you were when I first offered you my friendship. For the ‘*trifling wilfulness*,’ we shall find time to talk of it hereafter; but the first use I make of the power you have given me is to command you both instantly to set to work to get all things ready for your voyage. Cæsar shall be here with Karl's little cart in an hour or two, to convey your packages to Reichland; and Karl himself shall follow to escort you home—HOME, my dear children, to my heart and house. You ought to thank me, Edward,

for not bringing him with me, as he desired most vehemently that I would do; but I knew that I was very angry, and that I should scold you heartily, and I did not think it quite fair that anybody but Lucy should overhear it."

Jestingly as this was said, its thoughtful and observant kindness was like balm to the wounded and sensitive Edward, and he resolved, let it cost him what it would, to endure the sight of Sigismund's happiness without flying from it,—nay, even to welcome it as a penance for having suffered an earth-born passion to mix itself in his soul with his thoughts of heaven.

Lucy's joy at witnessing the benign effects of the good man's eloquence was in proportion to the heavy weight, almost amounting to despair, which had rested upon her heart before his arrival. The dreadful struggle that awaited her, between leaving for ever the brother she so loved and who so much needed her care, and remaining with him contrary to his wishes and his will, shook her firmness more than anything she had yet endured. But now all smiled again: they should together see that world on which, from her very earliest years, her fancy had been fixed; and, what was perhaps a blessing more dearly valued still, they should leave together, and, as she trusted, for ever, the land that had witnessed their bitter sufferings.

In a few hours they were again at Reichland; and poor Edward deserved more praise than any one, even including Lucy, thought of giving him, for the violent efforts he made to conquer a sensation of misery that more than once made him wish that, without sin, he could close his eyes for ever on the light of day. Yet all rejoiced at hearing him speak with hope of the future, and with pleasure at the idea of the voyage they were about to make. Neither Edward nor Lucy had ever yet seen the ocean; a circumstance by no means uncommon to the uncommercial portion of the inhabitants of Kentucky;—indeed, the proportion of females in that state who have seen the sea, to those who have not, may be fairly stated as about one to a hundred.

This first evening that Edward Bligh had consented to pass with the happy race of Steinmark as one of their family—this first night that he had consented to pass beneath their roof, was that of Thursday. The following day had nearly run its course, the labours of preparation were nearly ended, and all, save one, were looking forward to the morrow as the delightful moment at which their hopes were to begin their course of fruition, when Hermann Steinmark, who shared all his father's hatred to the feeling which is called "*prejudice of colour*," said to his mother,

"I wish you would let that gay young Caesar and his *chère amie* go in the same waggon with us, mother. It would be a perfect treat to watch their ecstasy."

"I think so too, Hermann. I never saw creatures so happy. And it is the prettiest thing in the world, too, to watch Phebe's little April showers when she thinks of her poor mother; for then again comes the bright sunshine of love and hope, and her tears are dried in an instant. But we shall not have place for two—and you would not be so cruel as to part the lovers?"

"How many does your waggon hold?" said Edward, timidly.

"Nine," answered Mary,—“three on each seat: and I really do not think it would be fair to the horses, especially as we have the use of them out of grace and favour, to take more. So Hermann must postpone the pleasure of watching the happy pair till we are fairly launched upon the Mississippi; and before we reach Germany, he will have a very fair opportunity of judging whether their affection is likely to be enduring.”

"But if you take them with you, there will be but nine," said Edward. "My kind friend half promised to indulge me in one *trifling selfishness*; and this is, the determination to follow you to New Orleans on Monday."

No one made any answer. Frederick Steinmark, who was talking very gaily to Lucy at the moment this declaration was made, stopped short in the midst of what he was saying, but uttered not a word in reply to it. About half an hour afterwards he left the room, and as he did so, touched the arm of Edward, saying, "Come with me, Bligh, for a moment—I want to speak to you."

Edward immediately rose and followed him. What passed between them was never exactly explained; but, by some means or other, every one in the house knew before they went to bed that the drive to Natchez on their way to New Orleans was postponed.

The Saturday passed in saying farewell to such of their widely-scattered neighbours as had excited most interest among them. The German servants were sent off with the goods. The favourite walks, and even the favourite trees, were visited; and even the very cattle which had been sold with the estate received a parting look of kindness.

Edward and Lucy ventured to visit many of those who had made part of their woodland congregation. Their speedy departure, they knew, must quench any jealous fears which seeing them address the negroes might excite; and they were personally so entirely unknown among the officers on the estate of Paradise Plantation, that they were considered by all, except such of the slaves as knew them, as travelling strangers who were examining all things for the gratification of their curiosity.

Lucy remarked that as her brother turned away from each of his table and sorrowing flock,—and many were the tears they shed,—he

spoke a few farewell words apart to each of them. Poor Peggy was the last they visited,—and a melancholy visit it was : but she, too, received Edward's last greeting apart, and seemed to derive some feeling of comfort from his words. Old Juno could not be found : they visited her remote cabin twice in the course of the day ; but the frail door was locked, and every attempt at making themselves heard ineffectual.

On Sunday, which was the good Clio's only holiday, she was invited to take her tea with the Reichland family ; Lucy and her brother both declaring, that so far from feeling any displeasure at the mysterious story and unintelligible warning she had brought, they had the highest respect for her character as described by the neighbours who had known her so long, and loved her the better for the care she had laboured to take of them, though not very well understanding what the danger was from which she wished to guard them.

Clio appeared in her very best attire ; and, spite of the sorrow she expressed and felt at the approaching departure of her friendly neighbours, she was so elated at the rich inheritance which had fallen to her nephew, that her conversation was, as Karl observed, perfectly sparkling with delight. All trace of her late alarm seemed to have passed away ; and when Mary referred to it by inquiring if she had heard any more of the threatened mob, she only answered,

“ Dear Mississ Steinmark, ma'am, what can be heard of now at Natchez but only the prosperity of my darling of Paradise Plantation ? ”

“ Then you have heard nothing more of that strange story about our friends Mr. and Miss Bligh ? ” said Steinmark, looking at them as he spoke.

“ No, indeed ; and I beg their pardons downright, for I expect 'twas a story my Jonathan brought out to us for fun—for never a word more of it have I heard, good or bad. He was after asking me a lot of questions, Jonathan was, before he was the master of your place, Master Steinmark, and Paradise Plantation, and the five hundred niggers, and the money, and all the rest of the treasure : but since that, though he has been out to tell us of his greatness, he said never a word about any of ye.”

“ Well, Clio,” said Lotte, “ I hope now you will leave off working in the store, and that you will enjoy yourself all the rest of your life, as you deserve to do.”

“ Me !—Miss Lotte dear ?—Do you mean me never to do no more work ?—My ! that would be jam ! But how can I be so unreasonable as to look to live like a lady, jest because my darling boy's made a planter, and a congress man, and a senator, and a president, maybe, Miss Lotte ? Why for should I be a burden upon him for

all that ?—Bless his sweet face ! I'd work for him now, if he'd let me, harder than any slave—only it would not seem so grand for him."

This was a theme poor Clio could not weary of ; but the time for her departure came, and she did depart—and many were the good wishes interchanged, and many and affectionate the farewells spoken, and repeated, till the last gate was passed and the simple-hearted Clio disappeared.

For another hour or two the family remained together. The time and manner of departure on the morrow was then finally arranged, and the party separated.

Lucy, as she passed a small room at the foot of the stairs, fancied she heard her brother's voice within it, conversing earnestly with Steinmark. She paused for a moment to ascertain the fact ; for it was her purpose to enter Edward's room before she went to bed, as during the whole day she had not passed a moment with him alone. Whilst listening for a sound that might give her the information she desired, she heard Steinmark say, " And they have promised to meet you ?" Edward replied, " They have ;" and satisfied as to the fact, though puzzled by the words, she passed on, waiting on the stairs for Lotte, who had been engaged with her mother for a few moments in the parlour below.

As soon as the two girls reached the apartment which they shared between them, Lotte prepared immediately to go to bed, declaring herself so fatigued by all her walkings and talkings, that she feared she should hardly be awake in the morning early enough to be ready by the hour fixed.

" You look tired, dear Lotte," said Lucy,— " so make haste and get to sleep as fast as you can. I will not disturb you ; but I must say one word to my poor pale Edward before I go to bed, for I have hardly spoken to him to-day. I shall not stay long, and I will creep back again as quietly as a mouse."

" You will not find your brother in his room, Lucy ; my mother told me that he is shut up for the third time to-day with my father in the little parlour. What can they be consulting about now ?"

" Heaven knows !" said Lucy, with something like an anxious sigh. " But if he is not come up stairs yet, I will wait for him in his room. So good night, dear Lotte!—go to sleep, and be sure I will not wake you."

Lucy found, as she expected, her brother's room untenanted ; and sitting down beside the open window, she determined to wait for him. She still fancied that she heard at intervals the voices of Steinmark and her brother in the room below ; but at length everything was silent, the last sound she heard being that of a door carefully opened and then closed again. But still her brother came not ; and

weary as she was, she would have given up the idea of speaking to him and stolen to bed beside her friend, had not a sort of vague anxiety, a dread of something though she knew not what, still kept her nervously awaiting his approach.

While debating with herself whether she should not go down stairs to learn what detained him, she fancied she saw through the still open window, which commanded a view of the path that led from the back of the house into the forest, the figure of Edward gliding rapidly along amongst the trees. The waning moon had but just risen above the horizon, but the stars were very bright, and the fire-flies so numerous and so brilliant as greatly to increase the light. For a moment he was out of sight among the bushes; but again he reappeared, and that in a spot more open. She could not be mistaken, his white summer dress and the large straw hat he wore made this impossible: it was certainly Edward; but where he could be going thus secretly, without ever communicating his purpose to her, defied conjecture. She continued to watch him till he was out of sight, and then sat down again, not so much with the idea of awaiting his return, as to meditate upon the mysterious cause of his expedition. Whatever it might be, however, it was evident that Steinmark was acquainted with it; and this conviction reassured her so greatly, that she rose from her chair, determined to go to bed and to sleep with the conviction that nothing could be wrong which he thought right.

As she gave one parting look, as she turned to go, at the solemn shades of that dark forest which she was so soon about to leave for ever, the remembrance of the midnight prayers of which it had been so often the temple, came to her mind, and at the same instant the idea struck her with all the force of conviction, that it was for this her brother was gone. It was the Sabbath night—it was the very hour at which his congregation were wont to meet—it was the last time he could ever raise his voice in prayer among them. It was for this he had stayed, it was for this the good Steinmark had delayed his departure, and it was for this he had spoken a farewell word in secret to each of his flock.

“Inexpressibly affected by this idea, and feeling that his reason for excluding her from a scene which they had hitherto so constantly and so delightfully enjoyed together, must be that he still thought some danger might be feared from the persons who had so terrified her at Natchez, she instantly decided upon following him.

With noiseless steps she descended the stairs, and passing through a slightly fastened door into the farm-yard, she gained the path by which her brother had disappeared, unheard and unseen by any.

This path turned, before it penetrated the forest, in such a direction as to command the principal front of the house; and as Lucy looked

towards it as she passed along, she perceived that the large windows of the common sitting-room were still lighted.

"They are waiting up for him," thought Lucy: "can I forgive them for endeavouring to make me less watchful and less careful of him than themselves?"

She walked as rapidly as the imperfect light would permit through a very tough and unfrequented path; but when she arrived at length at the comparatively open space where the prayer-meetings had always been held, she rejoiced most fervently that she was not absent from the scene that met her view. Her heart had rightly suggested the object of Edward's secret walk—he was there surrounded by the hapless beings to whom he had given hope unknown before. He had already concluded the prayer in which with whispered cadence they were all wont to join, and was addressing to them a farewell so full of pious feeling and of tender love; that the strongest emotion was evinced by those he was about to leave;—sobs and groans interrupted him, while his own tears fell thick and fast upon his pallid cheeks.

Lucy gazed at the whole scene for a moment, and then, unseen by any, emerged from the trees, and knelt silently down behind her brother.

It must have been a hard and crabbed nature that could have resisted the holy fervour and the deep melancholy of that parting scene.

Edward ceased—then once more raised his voice to implore a blessing on them, stretched out his arms and waved a last farewell, and turning at last with slow and lingering step to go, received the pale and weeping Lucy in his bosom.

Startled, but not displeased,—for now he believed indeed that no ambushed danger threatened them,—he drew her arm within his, and equally unable at that moment either to give or receive explanation, they silently entered the covert of the forest in the direction that led to Reichland.

Before they had taken many steps, however; a pair of powerful arms seized Edward and held him pinioned; while a man armed with a pistol started from the bushes into the path before them, and presenting the muzzle to the breast of Lucy, said in a whisper too low for the departing negroes to hear,—“Speak one word, or utter a single squeak; and by God the gal shall be shot dead before ye!”

These words contained a power more effectual than anything save death itself for obtaining the silence demanded, and the party remained in the same attitude and without a word being breathed by any of them for many minutes. The man who held Edward then said to his companion; “Peer out a spell, and see if the black beetles are off.”

The man who held the pistol obeyed this command, still keeping it,

however, directed towards the prisoners ; and in a few minutes resumed his post, saying—" Crawled off every varment of 'em."

" Now, then, for your rope, Hogstown ;—we'll bind this soft saint hand and foot, lest he might take a fancy to kicking ; and as to the miss, I'll manage her in a jiffy—you've got no Choctaw guard now, my dear, to take your part."

" But a white man may do as well as a red one," cried Karl Steinmark, making his way through the bushes, and seizing the speaker by the collar.

Fortunately the other ruffian had laid his pistol on the ground while he assisted in binding Edward ; and as Karl was followed by his father and his two brothers, all well armed with bludgeons, the struggle was of no long duration. Karl caught up the almost fainting Lucy, and carried her off in his arms ; Henrich seized upon the pistol ; and Steinmark and Hermann, after releasing Edward, quietly led him away, merely informing their discomfited landlord, for it was no less a man, that if he or his companion approached them, the pistol should be instantly discharged.

Steinmark's first idea was that there must be others still lying in ambush near them ; but perceiving that the only two who had hitherto appeared were walking off very rapidly in a contrary direction, he marshalled his own party into good marching order, and not thinking Lucy in a state to answer questions, endeavoured to learn from Edward how it happened that she was there, when he had so positively promised not to take her.

Of this imprudence at least it was easy for the agitated young man to clear himself ; but when his friend said, " And where, Edward, are all the reasonings by which you proved so ably that there could be no danger that this wretched Whittlaw should pursue you farther ?" he was silent. He had, as he well knew, affected more confidence in the rich man's forgetting him amidst his new possessions than he felt ; and he dared not say to Steinmark that it had been less terrible to him to brave the chance of a martyrdom—which he had often prayed for—than leave the land without invoking a parting blessing on his forsaken people.

His meek silence availed him better perhaps than any defence could have done, and Frederick Steinmark only added in a tone of deep felt satisfaction, " Well, well, young wronghead, it is all very happily over ; so no farther reprovings are necessary. But truly Lucy would find it advisable to attach to her daily service a body-guard of stout Choctaws if she remained in the country with you, Edward, for somehow or other you have contrived to render our hitherto peaceful forest no very peaceable retreat for her."

Poor Edward felt the truth of this and sighed deeply, but again he answered not; and the kind-hearted Steinmark held out his hand to him, saying "Come, come, Bligh, I think we must all exchange indulgences. You must forgive me and my boys for breaking parole and coming after you,—which, by the way, you would never have known if you had not needed it; and we must forgive you, now and for ever, I suppose, for your rashness and pertinacity; and we must all forgive this very naughty girl, if we can, for the risk she made us run of all being very miserable for her sake.

The tone in which this was said produced its intended effect on Edward, for once more he looked up again; it rallied too the spirits of Lucy; and the whole party returned to the farm with the happy consciousness of having escaped a great danger, and the happier feeling still which resulted from knowing that a very few hours would take them for ever from the region where peril so treacherous might still be feared.

CHAPTER L.

On the night, or rather morning, in which old Juno returned to her hut after her laborious and futile progress among the members of Edward's congregation, she threw herself in moody disappointment on her bed, and lay there many hours moaning and lamenting herself most piteously. From the dreadful hour in which she saw the last of that race, to whose idea she had clung with such pertinacious fanaticism of love for more than fifty years—from that hour the image of the fair dead girl had never left her brain. The sight had not driven her mad,—she would have suffered less if it had;—but, though her already shattered reason was not totally overthrown by it, her passions had been roused to a degree of violence that rendered her reason, such as it was, but little able to struggle with them.

It was grief, bitter but tender grief, which had bedewed the lovely corse with tears when first she made the terrible discovery; but from the moment she discovered, by the perusal of the letter that poor Selina left, how great a share the ever-detested Whitlaw had in the tragedy, every other sentiment was merged in a longing, anxious, desperate craving for revenge. She knew—no one so well, for she had made it her occupation to watch him—how savage, how pitiful, how wanton had been his use of the power his weak and wicked patron had trusted to him. She knew that his very name was abhorred, and his approach shunned, almost as much from loathing as from fear.

How, then, could she doubt that she should find agents to do her will? How could she conceive that her influence over the black people, so boundless as it seemed on every point on which she chose to use it, should fail in persuading them to do that which she believed their own wrongs would gladly lead them to undertake without her?

But so it was; and this unexpected check to a purpose so fixed, a consummation which at one stroke she meant should atone for all the sufferings of her long and wretched life, curdled her blood, and left her in a state as much more terrible than madness, as conscious agony is when compared to torpor.

When the bright rays of the noonday-sun streamed through the narrow window of her hut, she rose as if by instinct, and opened her door to admit the air and light more freely. But she went not forth; as usual, into the populous fields, but sat down upon the ground, resting her back against the logs of her hut, and remained there uttering a low plaintive moan throughout the day.

At night-fall, after her allotted labours were completed and her little girls fast asleep, Peggy walked over to visit her. It was rarely that so many hours passed without the old woman's coming to bestow some of her idleness in Peggy's wash-house; and, in addition to a friendly wish to know if illness had kept her at home, the proud but sorrowing mother of Phebe longed to talk to one, who knew so much as Juno, of the glory and happiness about to befall her child, as well as of the bitter grief it cost her.

She found the old woman weak from want of food, and exhausted both in body and mind by the strong agony she had endured. Without this friendly visit, and the aid administered during the course of it, it is probable that old Juno would not have survived that night. A morsel of bread, however, and a little dose of the universal panacea, soon, so far restored her, that she was able to speak of Phebe, her hopes and her happiness.

"Lament not for her going, woman!—it would be less sinfully selfish were you to wish to feast upon her heart's blood, than to desire to keep her in this accursed land of whip and chains, and infamy—innocent infamy!—infamy blacker than hell, and that no negro virtue can ever atone or wipe out!—You are no mother, Peggy, if you wish to keep her here; only that you may look upon her shame and misery."

"I do not, Juno,—God knows I do not; and I will bless you with my latest breath for having done this great thing for her."

Juno accepted these thanks, and felt that she deserved them—and so far there was "excellent sympathy" between them. But not a word did the moody and miserable woman say to the patient Christian slave who so gratefully and assiduously attended her, of the dark wishes—

hopes perhaps no longer—over which her soul brooded ; for she shrewdly guessed that she should find no sympathy for them. But she listened patiently, if not with a very lively interest, to all the news that Peggy had to tell, among which the intended departure of the Blighs with the Steinmark family made a distinguished figure.

“ Is that true, Peggy ? ” said the old woman abruptly.

“ It was my Phebe told me so,—and she’s not given to lying, Juno.”

“ If Phebe said it, it is true, and I thank God for it,” replied Juno ; “ though it is like thanking him for hiding from us the last gleam of light and hope that was left us. Yet I do thank God for it. Their young lives will be saved thereby, and the infernal wretch will thirst for their blood in vain.”

“ What blood, Juno ?—Come, get to bed ;—you shake and tremble, and your head seems wandering ; you have fasted too long to-day, Juno. Now Phebe is gone from us, I must teach my little Sally to come over for a spell every day to look after you : I am sure you’ve been a friend to me and mine, and you must not be neglected.”

“ That’s well, that’s well,—thank ye, dear Peggy ; and now go, and I will shut the door after you. I hope they will not come to me ;—I would not see that pretty fair white girl again—no, it would drive me mad ! ”

It was probably this dread of seeing Lucy, and of her bringing fresh to her mind again, as she had often done, the idea of her own beautiful descendants, which induced old Juno to refuse them entrance when on the following day the brother and sister took her hut, in the circuit of farewell visiting which they made among the Christian part of the slave population of Paradise Plantation ; and this same feeling might have contributed, with other gloomy and unsocial thoughts, to keep her during the whole of the Sabbath day and night from all her usual haunts.

But early on the Monday morning, almost before the sun was fully risen, her old habit of restlessness seemed to return upon her, and she rambled out into the dewy forest behind her hut, feeling refreshed and invigorated by the long-accustomed air and exercise from which she had for several days abstained.

Either unconsciously, or it might be to meet the pleasant freshness of that open space, Juno directed her steps to the spot where but a few hours before Edward Bligh and his sister had so nearly lost their freedom or their lives. All was now profoundly still there, and she seated herself upon the stump of a tree, with her chin resting as heretofore upon her faithful bamboo, meditating on the words of hope and patience, which she had so often heard the young preacher pronounce in that dark spot.

While thus buried in thought, and as unconscious of the vicinity of human beings as if she had been alone in the universe, a sound like a distant shout startled her ear.

"What is that?" said she, starting up; "are the fiends making holiday because the holy man is gone?"

Another and another prolonged "hurrah!" found its way through the still air, and onward and onward the fierce sound came. Juno felt stupified. The sun was even now but struggling through the morning mists, and the very slaves were not as yet led out to labour. Then whence and from whom the sound, which, louder than the struggling multitudes of a great city could create, unless under circumstances of some terrible excitement, now rolled along the startled solitude of the forest?

A thought occurred to the aged negress that for a moment brought back as by the touch of enchantment all the strength and energy that she had lately lost.

"They are in insurrection!" she exclaimed aloud in an accent of the wildest ecstasy: "Onward! onward! brave and desperate men!—onward! onward!—We will join you, every soul of us, the whole five hundred!—Onward! onward!" and then added in a hollow whisper,—"*Whillaw!* I shall have thee at last!"

The sound of voices was now accompanied by that of numerous footsteps, and she felt that, be they what they might, in another moment she would be in the midst of them unless she sought shelter within the numerous masses of underwood that surrounded the place.

Sure as she felt that they were negroes and friends who approached, a mixture of caution and curiosity induced her to conceal herself while they passed, that she might thus at vantage look out upon their strength and learn their object.

Such a shelter as she sought was easily found; and trembling with eagerness and hope, old Juno ensconced herself behind a bush and awaited the result.

She waited not long. In front of the noisy throng marched four men, each holding high a pole, from whence projected transversely a piece of timber, connecting each with each; and from the frame thus formed, dangled the effigies of two men, evidently intended to represent the process of hanging. The one of these represented a man in the dress of a clergyman, the other bore the black visage of a negro.

Disappointment had assailed poor Juno in so many ways, that it seemed, as she would have herself expressed it, to have become her natural food. She retained her situation till the whole of Edward's "*Temple*," as he was wont to call it, was completely filled with the lowest rabble of Natchez; and perceiving that they meant to make a

halt there, she prepared to depart, certain that no noise she might make in doing so could reach the ears of those who were vociferating so vehemently themselves.

Her purpose was, however, immediately changed when she remarked two or three men whose dress proclaimed them of a higher station in society than the rest, step forward from the crowd and prepare to harangue them.

One of these she instantly recognised as WHITLAW; and another of them was Hogstow, with whose person she was also well acquainted. It was Whitlaw who addressed the party first. His speech was violent, and by no means badly calculated to inflame the passions of a white mob, in a country where no night closes in without a thrilling fear that ere morning their wretched, feared, and hated slaves should rise in mutiny and take a bloody vengeance for all they had suffered. He asserted broadly, that numerous gangs of slaves had recently been urged to insurrection and indiscriminate murder of the white population by harangues uttered on the very spot where they then stood, by a fanatic advocate for emancipation called Bligh, supported, protected, and seconded by a German family of abolitionists called Steinmark.

"These, my friends," he concluded,—“these base white instigators, unworthy of their colour and their station, must be the objects of your just vengeance. Yourself, your wives, your children are not to be murdered with impunity by the ignorant black nigger agents of these Blighs and Steinmarks, without due vengeance taken on their treacherous heads.—I must here leave you, my friends; but you know my feelings, and you know my power. My friend Mr. Hogstow, who has accompanied you thus far, will explain to you better than I can do the nature of the duty you are upon—and also the zeal and liberality with which it shall be not only protected, but requited.”

This speech, which had been got up with very considerable care from various sources of popular eloquence, was listened to and welcomed with the greatest enthusiasm.

Whitlaw then retreated towards his home; and Hogstow came forward and took his place. His speech was more extemporaneous, and considerably less decorated with any figures of rhetoric, save those of slang; but he rushed with great spirit into the middle of his subject at once, giving the most precise instructions how they were to proceed after arriving at Reichland.

Old Juno, whose seventy odd years had brought not the slightest injury to the sense of hearing, which in her survived in its full acuteness every other, here gave the most earnest attention to the speaker's words—and they were words of terror. Edward Bligh and the venerable Steinmark were marked for public ignominy and death; the two

young women that would be found with them were on no account to be suffered to depart, but made prisoners, and committed to the hands of their noble friend and patron Mr. Whitlaw; while the young Steinmarks, who were likely to make a mischievous and obstinate resistance, were to be mown down indiscriminately, without giving quarter to any of them.

Mr. Hogstown then began to dilate at considerable length on the subject of pillage: his instructions were at once liberal and minute, and seemed calculated to give satisfaction to all,

Old Juno seized this opportunity to escape from her retreat. Spite of age and greatly increased infirmity, every nerve was now braced to the enterprise of reaching Reichland before the mob. Her inequality in point of strength was terrible, but in some other respects she had greatly the advantage of her powerful competitors. She knew

“—Each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle or bushy dell, of that wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,
Her daily walks, and ancient neighbourhood.”

And she knew that the beaten path into which they would infallibly fall soon after leaving this remote and abandoned clearing would lead them indeed to Reichland, but by a wide and beaten waggon-track, at least twice as long as that she should trace by going across a small morass, which afforded safe treading, however, for one who knew it as well as she did.

With an energy which seemed to herself like inspiration she set off, and far from having overrated the advantage her knowledge of the ground would give, she reached the house ere the head of the advancing squadron had arrived half way to it. But what a scene greeted her!—The whole family, with their two remaining servants (for the Germans had all been sent forward with the baggage), and guests were assembled upon the lawn, waiting for the horses which Caesar was in the very act of bringing round to fasten to the waggon into which the laughing Lotte had already sprung.* Hope and happiness shone in every eye, till even Edward's seemed to catch a mild reflection of it.

The old woman appeared to have lost the power of speaking by the rapid pace at which she had walked,—she stood still when she got into the midst of them, and wrung her hands. There was not one of them who did not believe that she was there to bid them an affectionate but melancholy farewell. Phebe, only, saw something in her manner that seemed in its agony beyond any sorrow she could feel at parting, and hastily leaving the packages she was about to place in the waggon, on the grass beside it, she approached her old friend, and seizing her hands, said hastily—“Juno! Juno! speak, for God's sake!—What have you got to say?”

"Murder! murder!" replied the poor old woman, panting most painfully; "they will all be murdered within twenty minutes if they do not hide or fly!"

"Master! master!" shrieked Phebe, "come and hear her!—Master Edward! fly!—It is you! it is you!"

"It is all," cried Juno, recovering her voice so as to be heard by every one of them; "a hideous mob is on the road to destroy you all; Edward, Edward Bligh is their first object—then the good Steinmark—then the women—then the young comely sons—call! all!"

"Oh! were it only me!" cried Edward in dreadful agony.

"How near are they, Juno?" said Frederick Steinmark, looking pale, but in a voice of perfect composure.

"It may be at a distance of half a mile."

"Hermann," resumed the father, "you are swift of foot,—fly quickly, and bring Clio Whittlaw hither: say only it is I who want her.—Cæsar, put to the horses instantly; Lotte, do not stir; Mary, Lucy, Phebe, get into the waggon, and you, Edward, with them. Drive Cæsar, to the back gate of Whittlaw's premises, and wait for me there."

The women were in the waggon in an instant, but Edward lingered, Frederick gave him a look as stern as his countenance could assume, and said, "Edward! will you delay us?"

The unhappy young man obeyed; but in doing so, tasted the bitterest pang of his painful life. "That he,—he, who as his heart told him was the cause of all,—that he, in the sight of the woman he loved, should be thus forced to shelter himself beside her, while her father, lover, brothers, were left to encounter danger, caused by him!"—he might have exclaimed with truth, as he hid his head between his hands, "The bitterness of death is past!"

They had hardly proceeded ten steps, when Clio came running to meet them. Steinmark seized her arms, in a manner at once to command her attention, and to prevent her beginning a string of questions that might not speedily finish.

"My good Clio," said he, "we are beset by a deadly peril—such as yourself predicted. A mob from Natchez is within a few minutes' distance of our house. Will you save these helpless women, Clio, by concealing them in the loft in which your goods are stowed?"

"Will I?—Oh, Jesus, yes! And if they kill me instead, what matters, Mr. Steinmark? One can die but once.—But wait a spell, for the love of God. Sister Whittlaw isn't up yet, that's jam; and brother's away for his bitters to the Eagle: but the niggers—you must bide while I send the niggers off, some one way, some another; mustn't I?"

"No, Clio. The waggon with the women is already at the gate of your yard; hasten then, good Clio, and place them, and the poor

youth with them, as best you can,—your premises will not be suspected; and I will speak to your slaves."

Steinmark, his sons, and the young Sigismond then proceeded in a body to the Mount Etna mansion, about which many negroes, both male and female, were employed. Frederick called them round him, and in few words told them that a mob from Natchez, determined to execute Lynch-law upon him and his family in consequence of their known hatred to slavery, were now within a few paces of his house. "Your good mistress Clío is willing to conceal our women if possible;—" will you betray us?"

"No, massa!—no, niggers die first!" was the impressive reply.

"Now then, Cæsar, drive the waggon back, and appear to be packing the furniture in it; and when you are questioned, say that the family are gone. And now, my sons," continued Frederick addressing Sigismond also as one of them, "I think the dearer part of ourselves is safe. Young Whitlaw is at the bottom of this, depend upon it; and the mob, paid probably by him, will not be likely to attack the warehouse of his father. As for ourselves, I do not believe it possible they would seek to take our lives; and our best course will be, I think, to walk into the woods in a contrary direction to that which leads to Natchez. They will be long occupied in examining and pilfering the house; and, by the help of our local knowledge here, it is very likely that we shall not encounter them."

As he spoke, the whole party moved rapidly on in the direction he pointed out; and by the time the bearers of the gallows had reached the lawn at Reichland, all those they came to seek there had disappeared.

Old Juno had placed herself on the ground as soon as she saw the family depart, for at that moment all power to stand seemed to forsake her; but when she remarked the well-assumed air of busy indifference with which Cæsar appeared to be employing himself about the waggon, she got up and joined him in his employment.

It must be observed, that on all occasions when Lynch-law is administered, the real instigators never appear. It passes for the work of passion—a sense of injury—or overwrought enthusiasm on the part of the people; but never as the concerted project of a set of men, who, finding the laws incapable of giving authority as uncompromising as they wish to the iniquitous system which they are determined to pursue, though their country should fall to pieces in the struggle, have devised this appalling means to work their will. Even Hogstown, therefore, though only himself an agent acting as the spring to set this terrific machine in motion, had disappeared; and the throng rushed onward with no leader but their whim and their will, and no command to obey beyond a general standing order to pillage, slay, and destroy to the best of their power.

"What! jest going to start, by G—d!" exclaimed a fellow who walked beside the gallows with a rope in his hand, as if in readiness to put in practice upon a real man the operation already performed on the straw figures dangling from the frame which his companions bore along. "Stop! you nigger—quit, if you please, handling our property; bide still, you old black rag, and get out of the way—or maybe, slave as you are, you may be crushed as slick as if you were a canting white.—Now then, my boys! One brave shout before we set to—hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" screamed the multitude; and in the next moment they were half suffocating each other in their efforts to pass through the doors and windows of the house in search of their prey.

"Had we best bide their coming out again, mother?" said Cæsar.

"Yes, Cæsar," replied the old woman firmly. "They never spill slave blood if they can help it, because, as they say, it costs money; and we have nothing to do but answer their questions. REMEMBER—the whole family set off for the wharf at Natchez by the round-about waggon-road just two hours ago."

"Good!" answered Cæsar composedly; "I shan't blunder."

The two slaves then remained stationed very quietly, as if waiting for orders; Juno leaning against the end of the waggon, and Cæsar caressing the horses' heads with an air of the greatest indifference as to what those orders should be.

In a few minutes, the rioters, amounting to at least sixty or seventy men, poured out again from the house upon the lawn, and Cæsar and the old woman immediately became the centre of the throng.

"Where are all the d——n rogues and rascals belonging to this here house?" began the inquirer who screamed loudest. "You'd best be after telling us at once, you niggers, or we'll have your brains out, if we're obligated to have a subscription among us afterwards to pay for ye."

"I'll tell all I know, gentlemen," said Cæsar; "and I can tell no more if you cut me in slices."

"Well! that's a fact at any rate. Speak then, sheep's head,—where are they all got to?"

"They must be, as nearly as I can guess, gentlemen, ten miles out of twelve of the big waggon-road to Natchez. The Deerborn is as light as a feather, and they've got the young baron's fine pair of horses."

"And how in the devil's name did they hear we were coming that long ago?" said one.

"Not possible!" cried another, "for we didn't hardly know as we was to start ourselves by then."

"God love ye, gentlemen!" said Cæsar, grinning with a look of admirable ease and fun, "they knowed no more about you than the

man in the moon, or maybe they wouldn't have gone Natchez way, I'm thinking."

"D—d true that too," cried a shrewd fellow who was beginning to handle some of the packages; "and you, I expect, Master Mungo, was to follow 'em with the rest of their plunder?"

"Yes, sir," replied Cæsar very civilly.

"Then we're stumpt pretty considerable, I expect," observed the gentleman who bore the rope.

"I vote for setting fire to the premises," said one;—"I don't like to be had out this way for nothing."

"That's a fact," answered his neighbour; "and if we make a blaze and an uproar, we shall get the Spanish wheels at any rate."

"To it, then!" cried many voices at once. "Go to the kitchen hearth, you old crocodile, and fetch us a brand; and you too, Mungo—scamper to save your life."

Cæsar darted off like an arrow; while Juno followed him at the best pace she could, assailed as she went by abuse, shouts of laughter, and any light articles at hand that could without much trouble be thrown after her.

Cæsar's quick return, with a glowing brand in each hand, and showing his teeth from ear to ear, did much, not only towards securing his own safety, but in removing all doubts as to the truth of his statement.

"He'd never be so ready and slick to burn down the house if he expected 'em back again, that's a fact," observed a fellow who had seized one of the firebrands from his hand. And in truth the safety of the negroes was fully secured, and their very existence forgotten in the excitement which followed. The most combustible articles of furniture were rapidly collected together from various rooms by a dozen active hands, and piled together in the middle of the large sitting-room; and to this the fire was applied. The blaze was as rapid and as destructive as the most zealous of these *ministers of justice* could desire, and the dry and abundant woodwork of the building soon became one continuous fabric of blazing fire.

Far and near the forest glowed in the high and flaring light. Fragments of rafters fell scattered in all directions from the roof; the light fences caught the flame, which literally seemed to "run along upon the ground," till they reached the barns and outbuildings, that in a few seconds added their wooden and easily ignited materials to the spreading conflagration.

Clio meanwhile had performed the duty required of her with that eager sort of effective activity which the heart only can inspire. The trembling females followed each other with the feverish haste of terror up the stairs leading to the ware-room—all but Lucy Bligh. She

watched her brother's eye, and fancied that she saw in it a wild wish of escaping from the oppressive safety of this enforced retreat.

"I will not mount, Edward!" she said; "I will not put my foot upon the stair till I see you walk before me."

For an instant only he hesitated, and then obeyed the command, which even in that terrible moment he felt proceeded from a purpose more fixed and settled than his own.

The wide chamber, half filled with lumbering cases, some still unpacked, and others emptied of their various contents, offered as favourable an opportunity for concealment as it is well possible to imagine, and it required no great ingenuity for the whole party so to have disposed themselves as to leave no trace of their presence there to any one who might accidentally enter.

"The shorter I bide the better," said the good Clio, retreating. "Keep quiet, dears, and you'll be safe enough, I'll answer for it; but don't look out of them windows that side, 'cause it looks t'wards the Eagle. That big door at the end is t'wards your place, Lotte dear, and there's nothing to see you there, if you've a mind to peep; but don't open it only a bit, you know."

She descended the stairs as she spoke, and they heard her lock and double-lock the door at the foot of them.

For the first few minutes that followed their imprisonment, the women gazed in each other's faces in a manner that seemed to say,

"Look I as pale as you?"

but not a word was spoken, nor a movement made. By degrees, however, the statues seemed gradually returning to life—Edward looked by far the most wretched of the party.

In another moment Lotte was employing herself in arranging a seat at once comfortable and concealed from view; and when it was completed, she took her mother's hand and silently led her to it.

Poor Mary, however, who was in no state of mind to be comfortable, shook her head as if to refuse it,—but she looked in Lotte's face and yielded.

Lotte herself then crept to the side of Lucy, and throwing her arms round her, buried her face in her bosom to hide the tears that would flow. The miserable Edward withdrew himself to a distant part of the wide loft, and placed himself in such a position, that his face was unseen by any.

Phebe was the only one of the party who availed herself of Clio's hint, that she might without danger reconnoitre the space that lay between Mount Etna and Reichland, by cautiously unclosing the wooden shutter which secured—not a window, for there was no glass in it—but

a sort of door-way, that opened in that direction, and which was occasionally used for hoisting goods too bulky to be carried up the stairs.

After yielding for a few moments to a weakness which both felt to be wrong, the two girls approached Mary, and sitting down on the floor beside her, rested their heads upon their knees. She threw an arm round each, and softly whispered the consoling observation that no sounds were heard approaching.

At this moment Phebe, who had continued peeping through an aperture of half an inch wide, which was all she would venture to open, suddenly uttered a fearful shriek, and then exclaimed, "Oh, God have mercy on us!—all the whole world's on fire!" She clasped her hands as she spoke, and the heavy shutter fell back flat against the wall, making the whole loft glow with the reflection of the blaze that burst from every window at Reichland.

The terror of being discovered, which a moment before had made them fearful of whispering to each other, yielded before the sudden panic of this frightful spectacle, and Mary and the two girls uttered a fearful cry. Edward rushed to the opening, and gazed at the sight with a species of misery that was all his own—no human being could conceive or share it.

The dreadful idea occurred to Lotte, that the mob had seized upon the gentlemen, and having secured them in the house, had taken this dreadful means to destroy them. With a countenance that spoke with sufficient plainness the agony she felt, she wrung her hands, exclaiming in a voice of piercing anguish, "Oh, father! father!—Sigismond!—Brothers!—All perishing!"

Edward gazed at her working features. For one wild moment he fixed his eyes immovably upon her face, then rushed to the open doorway and sprung through it to the ground.

Lucy saw, or rather felt what his purpose was the moment he moved, and threw herself forward to cross his path; but she was too late, and Phebe seeing her still moving onward, and thinking she would precipitate herself after him, seized the shutter, and with great presence of mind, closed it; then placing her back against it, she said, "You shall kill me first, Miss Lucy."

No voice was heard in that first moment of horror; all believed that he must have perished by the fall. It was Lucy who first found power to speak; but the voice was not her own, it sounded hollow and unnatural—"Look out!—Phebe!—look out!—look down upon the earth and tell me if he is there."

Phebe no longer feared for any desperate act on the part of Lucy that might hazard her life; she feared only for her reason; and without uttering a word of caution or delay which might irritate her, she

hastened to obey her, again threw open the shutter, and, sick and shuddering, gave a glance below.

"Thanks be to God, he has escaped, Miss Lucy!—It is not so high, my dearest mistress, as we thought it was; sit down again and wait—for wait we must—he is gone to find out news for us."

The relief of knowing that Edward had not perished by his desperate leap was certainly great; they all felt it, and for a moment they were cheered by it; but the next, all the agony of terror came back upon them.—Where was he gone?—How would he conceal himself from his desperate enemies?—Why was that fire burning so fiercely?—Who might have perished there?

Such were the questions which each asked the other, but there were none of answer. At last Phebe said, "Why should I be shut up here for? Slaves are never murdered in this way—for whoever kills a slave is obliged to pay money for it.—They won't kill me, Miss Lucy, I do not fear them—I do not fear even for Cæsar; but I fear for you—I fear for you all, kind and good! if you stay much longer here without knowing news of those you love, it will kill you or drive you mad. I must get out, mistress," continued the determined girl, addressing Mary: "if you will help me with your hands, I can do it in safety."

"And what do you propose to do, Phebe, when you are out?" said her mistress.

"I must do as the time bids me," replied Phebe; "but I can go and come—I know I can—and I can bring you tidings before you die for the want of them."

They all felt that she was right, and that if indeed she could descend with safety on the ground, there was little doubt but that she would be able with little risk to relieve them at her return from their intolerable uncertainty respecting the fate of their friends.

"Do you see this roll of domestic?" said Phebe, removing as she spoke the cord that bound fifty yards of stout cotton cloth into a tight roll. "If among you, my dear mistresses, you can but manage to hold or to fasten this piece of dry goods firm so that I might let myself down gently by one end of it, I should be as safe as you are."

The ingenuity of the anxious women soon enabled them to arrange Phebe's contrivance in a manner that seemed to render it very tolerably secure, and the intrepid and active girl contrived by their assistance to reach the ground without injury.

The linen was drawn up and the shutter closed after her, but ever and anon an anxious eye peeped out upon the wood. The trees, however, prevented much of the interval between the two farms from being visible; but they could at least ascertain from time to time that no one was approaching. The fire continued to throw up at intervals above the trees large columns of smoke and flame; but the flight of

Edward, and the danger he must necessarily be exposed to, superseded at this moment every other terror.

We must leave them in this state of terrible uncertainty to follow Phebe in her search.

CHAPTER LI.

As soon as Phebe found herself safely on her feet, her first care was to get into the nearest and thickest part of the wood, that the direction in which she was going might not be traced. She then proceeded as swiftly as the bushes into which she had entered would permit, towards Reichland. The flaming pile might have directed her course, had the pathless thicket she had chosen, been more intricate still; and ere she had proceeded towards it for many minutes, the sound of distant but clamorous voices came upon her ear. For a moment she stood still, for she felt how terrible might be the scene to which she was drawing near. She thought that if Cæsar could see her thus rashly approaching a multitude of desperate men, he would blame her for it, and say she had not thought of him. But she did think of him, and the hope of learning how it fared with him was one among the many feelings which urged her to undertake this terrible embassy. The uproar appeared so violent as she reached the end of the copse surrounding the lawn, that ere she emerged from it, she held counsel with herself whether some better and safer scheme might not be devised for learning what was going on, and what had become of Cæsar, of the gentlemen, and above all, of Master Edward, than thus exposing herself to the brutal insolence of the multitude whose voices reached her from the other side of the house.

While she stood thus doubtfully, a new outcry—a fresh burst of popular feeling, a wild sound that seemed to partake of triumph and surprise, came shrilly and keenly to her ear.

“They have got him!—they have seized him!—they have seized Master Edward!” cried Phebe in an agony; and falling on her knees, she prayed aloud—“O God, have mercy on him! Kind and gentle—good and holy man!—O God, have mercy on him!”

More anxious than ever to know all, yet totally incapable of braving the sight which she felt certain would meet her if she did but turn the corner of the building before her, Phebe remained helpless and sobbing upon her knees, her head resting against a tree, and all the spirit and courage of her character prostrate and gone. Her senses did not fail her, but a sort of torpor came over them which seemed to blunt

her feelings, and though her tears flowed fast, she at last hardly knew for what.

In this state Cæsar found her. She started in terror at the sound of a footstep; and when she raised her eyes to look at him, she had not at the first glance the slightest idea who it was.

It is only those who are familiar with the negro countenance who can understand how a negro can *turn pale*, and sneers have been often produced by the expression among such as know not what it means; but those who do, need not be told that the aspect of the negro under circumstances which produce this bloodless effect is ghastly in the extreme.

Such was the aspect of Cæsar as his countenance met the eye of Phebe, and he trembled so exceedingly as to be perfectly incapable of speaking.

"Cæsar!" she exclaimed, as she recognised his beloved features—"oh, Cæsar!—is it over? Have they dipped their hands in his blood?"

But Cæsar answered not, and his breast heaved so convulsively that the poor girl threw her arms round him, saying, "Oh, Cæsar, cry, as I do;—let the tears come, Cæsar, or it will kill you!"

Cæsar did weep, and it relieved the bodily anguish under which he was suffering; but there was that at his heart which not even the influence of Phebe could in that hour assuage or soften.

"Will you not, for my sake, speak at once?" said Phebe, reproachfully.—"Cæsar! have they murdered Edward Bligh?"

Large drops of agony broke out upon the forehead of Cæsar,—he groaned, and beat his breast distractedly. "Phebe!" he cried at length, "I wish it had been another: don't be angry, my poor girl—but with my whole soul I wish it had been me!"

"Oh, my Miss Lucy!" sobbed Phebe, "who is it will tell her of it?—Not I, not I,—no, if I never see her more, I will not stand up before her and tell her they have killed him."

"No one shall tell her of it—no one *can* tell her of it," replied Cæsar; "let her believe or fancy what she will, but no one shall tell her that her dear gentle brother was murdered by the hands of ruffians."

"Cæsar!" said Phebe, shaking from head to foot, "did you see him die?"

"No, I did not!—I turned away and ran, Phebe, to hide my head, where I could neither see nor hear him."

* * * * *

The dreadful scene from which the faithful slave turned sickening away was one which the historian would gladly shrink from describ-

ing; but such things HAVE BEEN, nor could the narration of it be softened or omitted without destroying the fidelity of the "sketch."

When the unhappy Edward, to escape the intense misery of witnessing Lotte's agonies, sprang in a sort of frenzy from the loft, he reached the ground in safety, and with no fixed purpose but a sort of vague feeling that his mission was to seek for Steinmark, his sons, and the loved Sigismond, he ran swiftly towards the flames that he saw blazing before him through the trees.

A very few moments brought him before the smoking pile that once had been the happy home of the Steinmarks. The idea that the frightful ruin wrought there was his work, had taken such hold upon him that he became incapable of mixing any other with it, and he stood gazing at the dreadful spectacle, perfectly unconscious that a gang of savage, lawless, hired assassins, who were there only to seek his life, stood within a hundred yards of him.

For a minute or two he remained there perfectly unnoticed: the object upon which his own eyes were fixed occupied the eyes of all, and he might have come and viewed the conflagration, and retired again with perfect safety, had such been his will. At last the eye of some individual in the crowd was caught by the figure of the solitary man who stood before the flaming trophy of their triumph as if turned to stone.

"That chap don't seem to admire our work anyhow," said he, touching the arm of his neighbour and pointing to Edward.

"And who is he as dares find fault with it?—I should like to be told that. 'Twill be as well to ask him, I expect. Come along, will ye, and jest let's ask him what's his objection."

The pair accordingly walked deliberately up to Edward, and demanded his name.

"My name is Edward Bligh," was the unhesitating reply.

"The devil it is!" roared both the men at once, and, by a common impulse, at the same instant stretched their murderous hands towards him and held him fast till the whole rout rushed in a body towards him, and with savage yells proclaimed their joy at having found him.

"A fig for the Dutchman and all his race!" roared one among them; "they may go and be d—d!—here's the hero for us."

"The rope! the rope," halloed another; "toss the effigies into the flames, my lads—here's the real stuff for hanging!"

It was at this dreadful moment that poor Cæsar, who, the better to enact the part of an indifferent spectator, had stood loungingly watching the flames and leaning against the shaft of the waggon, uttered the wild cry of a madman and rushed into the wood.

The scene that followed his retreat was soon brought to its horrible conclusion. Some of the wretches present dragged their victim with most unneedful violence towards a tree, on which a rope was instantly fixed, amidst shouts and cries of savage jubilee.

As they drew near the fatal spot, the gentle unresisting martyr raised his eyes to heaven, and uttered aloud with fervent faith and hope, "Father and Saviour! receive my soul!" But even as he spoke a wretch seized on his throat, and sought to stifle the prayer ere it was uttered.

Edward spoke no more, and resigned his spirit as pure and untainted by the stains of earth as if he had breathed it back to heaven the hour he received it.

Such was the death his foreboding spirit had frequently predicted, and such the exit that in his gloomier moments he had wished for. And even when it came upon him in all its actual and unimagined horrors, he probably felt that it only fulfilled a destiny he had no wish to change, for no glance betrayed the slightest feeling of fear, no movement indicated resistance or regret.

Their impious task performed, the savage mob withdrew as rapidly as they had approached; and within ten minutes after the murder was committed, not a straggler remained near the spot.

One living being only watched the whole; and when the solemn stillness of solitude and death succeeded to the din that for one fatal hour had echoed through the peaceful woods of Reichland, one living being only remained to gaze upon the ruin that had been wrought.

Old Juno, safe in her helpless, worthless decrepitude, had continued unseen or unheeded by any. When the fire burst forth from the windows, she retreated to a vine-covered shed which stood at some distance from the house, and which had once been Lotte's dairy, and seated herself on a log beside it. It was near this shed that the fearful deed was consummated, and without moving an inch from the post she had taken, the wretched woman watched the tragedy to its close.

When all was over and everything profoundly still, Juno remained for some time longer without moving, as if to be quite sure that no straggler of the demon-rout was left behind. And then she rose, and giving one long steady look at the stiffening corse, while silent vows of vengeance seemed to bind up her heart and brain like ribs of iron, she followed the direction she had seen Cæsar take into the wood, and almost at the verge of it, and long before she had hoped to meet with him, she came to the spot where he and Phebe were weeping together.

"Is it over, mother?" cried Cæsar with streaming eyes and trembling lips.—"Say—is my dear, dear master in peace?"

"Edward Bligh is in heaven," replied the old woman solemnly—"as surely as his tormentors will be in——"

"Oh! speak not, speak not words that our sainted master would not like to hear," said Phebe, shuddering. "May God have mercy on all sinful souls! It was thus he taught me to pray, Juno; and as he taught me, so will I pray to my dying day!"

Juno answered not, but turning to Cæsar, said, "For the dead we can do nothing;—for the unhappy living—for that poor young thing that loved him so,—his poor orphan sister——"

The old woman stopped, for her voice failed her. "I did not think," said she after a moment's silence, "that I should ever shed another tear. And you, poor fellow! I thought, Cæsar, that sorrow was not in your nature. But listen to me, my good lad: you must not mourn for him in idleness. Have you any knowledge where they may all be found?"

"The women are all at old Whitlaw's," answered Cæsar;—"and I do not think the rest are far away. My new master said, as he told me to drive the waggon back, that he thought they might lie concealed within the woods."

"That is good hearing," replied Juno, "for they are wanted here.—Seek for them, Cæsar—they may come back in safety."

Cæsar set off on this commission with a light foot and heavy heart; and then Juno, turning to the weeping Phebe, inquired how and why she had left her ladies.

The history was soon told, and the poor girl concluded it with a fresh burst of grief, saying, "Juno, Juno, how shall I ever face her?—how shall I live to tell her the horrid, horrid truth?"

"You never can, Phebe,—you never must, you never shall!—Spare her young heart the never-ending horror of knowing how he died. Let her believe that his rash leap destroyed him,—that will be pain enough—yet it will spare her much."

"It ~~was~~ that leap destroyed him," cried Phebe, wringing her hands;—"and it was I unclosed the door. Oh, God! oh, God!—perhaps he had now been living if I had not done that!—Is not that dreadful, Juno?"

"It is idle talking, Phebe,—his life lay not in your silly hands, poor child. Comfort his sister, Phebe;—be loving and faithful to her all your life, and never, never let her know that the poor sainted boy was murdered."

Phebe promised with her very heart upon her lips to obey these words; and then they whiled away two weary hours of waiting, in talking of the motives that had sent forth the desperate band who had brought destruction and murder to that peaceful spot.

"I know it all!" cried Juno, with her wonted energy,—*"I know the mainspring that has moved it all; and if I find not means,"*—Then stopping short, she burst into a strange discordant laugh that sounded frightfully o Phebe's ears.

"You know not why I laugh, Phebe?—Then I must tell you. He has burnt out himself!—Whitlaw—the dastard murderer Whitlaw, who kills some by insult and some by the help of hired assassins,—he knew not, Phebe, that the German's house and goods made part of his new wealth—and so he burnt it."

The welcome sound of Frederick Steinmark's voice made Phebe turn her head, and at the distance of a hundred yards those they so anxiously waited for were seen approaching.

CHAPTER LII.

THE old and the young negress rose together from the ground, and stood before the gentlemen in silence. Tears not to be restrained fell from the eyes of Phebe, while the old woman looked as if years and sorrow had dried and withered her into a state too hard to suffer more.

Frederick Steinmark stopped when he saw them; and the four awestruck young men who had followed him while he walked on, listening to Cæsar's dreadful tale, now came up, and surrounded the women, hoping to hear from Phebe some tidings of the unhappy prisoners in the loft. But the poor girl's account only amounted to the assurance that she had left them in a condition little able to endure what was to fall upon them.

"My Miss Luey will die too," sobbed Phebe, "if she hears the truth—the whole ghastly dreadful truth!—Oh, master!" she added, turning to Frederick Steinmark, "what will you please to say to her?—what will you have me say?"

"First," cried Karl, pressing eagerly forward, "first let us inter her murdered brother. Say nothing—tell nothing—let no one go to her till this be done.—Oh, father! should Luey Bligh rush out and look upon him—"

"She shall not look upon him, Karl.—You are right;—wretched as they are, none must go near them till the earth covers him."

The hearts of the stout Germans trembled as they followed old Juno to the fatal spot. They had to pass the smouldering ruins of the house that for so many peaceful years had been their home. But the

sight caused no emotion;—the thought of Edward, so young, so intellectual, so holy, so beloved, brought to a bloody grave, filled every avenue to feeling, and they walked over their trampled and disfigured lawn, so often and so lately the scene of their sports and gambols, without one single image of the past rising to mix with the overwhelming sorrow of the present hour.

Phoebe had followed with the rest; but her heart failed her, and stopping short before they turned the corner that would give the object she dared not look upon to her sight, she sat down upon the ground and covered her face with her apron.

When they reached the spot, the eyes of all were fixed upon the earth. None seemed to have courage to raise them to what they knew would meet them.

"It must be done," said Juno sternly. "Remember his young sister: leave not that which you all dread to look upon, to blast her eyes."

The remonstrance was not lost, and the motive she suggested made their task more easy than any other could have done.

"Cæsar, my poor fellow, stand here and receive the body," said Frederick. "Hermann or Karl, one of you must climb the tree. But no!" he cried, suddenly recollecting himself, and gently pushing the trembling negro aside; "you shall not, Cæsar. Go, go, poor boy! It is too hard a trial."

The young men all stepped forward; but Cæsar at that moment forgot he was a slave, and speaking for the first time, since they had reached the spot, he said in a tone of command.

"No! none other, none but me—no other hand shall touch him!"

If an emperor had spoken, obedience could not have been rendered more respectfully. All stood aside; Karl cut the hateful knot, and the body of Edward dropped into the arms of his poor slave.

For a moment he seemed to hold it in a fond embrace; then letting it sink gently on the ground, he lay down beside it, kissed the pale lips, parted the dark curls upon the fair young brow, reverently pressed down the open eyelids, and uttered, as he did it, such deep and piteous moans, that no eye looked upon him unmoistened by a tear.

"He shall not lie here, Cæsar," said Frederick Steinmark,—"not here, where the felon feet of his murderers have rendered the sod accursed. We will carry him to the spot where he first opened to me his noble, generous, and most innocent heart. The place was Lotte's bower: it is not likely they have entered there, for the spot is sheltered from all eyes. Cut down some boughs, Henrich; we will all be his bearers."

No one spoke in reply; but the alacrity with which the order was obeyed told plainly that the feeling which dictated the removal was

shared by all. When the leafy bier was ready, Cæsar raised the body in his arms, and laid it, as tenderly as a mother might lay her sleeping child, upon the boughs. The father Steinmark supported the head, and the four young men placed themselves at the four corners. No one seemed to think that Cæsar had any farther duty to perform—he followed more as the chief mourner than the slave of Edward; and when the sad procession passed the spot where Phebe had remained, Juno, who had sought and joined her there, took her by the hand and led her after it. Thus the unhappy race for whose eternal welfare he had hazarded and lost his life, furnished, as they ought, his funeral train.

The grave was quickly dug, for there were many hands to aid the work; and when for one sad moment they relaxed in their labour, and, as if by common consent, stood gazing on the pale form that lay beside them, Juno urged them to continue, by saying, "On, on: remember Lucy."

He was laid in the grave; and young Henrich placed a Bible that he found lying near the fatal tree, and which they all believed must have been his, upon his breast. The young men were then about to throw upon him the kindred clay, when Frederick made a sign that they should forbear.

"One moment!" he said. "I am a Christian, boys, though no *professing* one, and we have long lived where God's only temple was in the hearts of his creatures; but I know how poor Edward felt,—I can guess what his wishes would be, and what he would do for me or mine were we laid low as he." In speaking the last words he stooped in such a manner as to permit his reaching the Bible; and then standing up, he read the most impressive of those touching passages appointed for the burial of the dead.

He then closed the volume, and laid it again upon the heart whose law it had ever been.

The sods now laid on Edward's breast were watered by the tears of those who placed them there; and if true affection and profoundest grief might be courted as giving solemnity to funeral rights, the obsequies of Edward Bligh were indeed duly solemnised.

This duty rendered to the dead, every thought again reverted to the poor prisoners. But before they could be released, it was necessary to decide what account was to be rendered to the unhappy Lucy respecting her brother.

"Tell her," said old Juno, with more firmness than any other appeared at that moment to possess,—“tell her at once, and with no lengthened tortures of doubt, mixing up hope with fear till the worn spirit has no strength left to bear the inevitable truth—tell her that her Edward Bligh is dead; but tell her not that he was foully murdered.”

"But how can we account for it?" said Frederick, who, though he perfectly agreed in adopting this pious fraud, felt as the moment approached when he must tell the tale, that it might challenge questions he should be at a loss to answer.

But from this embarrassment Phebe in a great measure relieved him, by stating that all those who saw poor Edward leap from the loft believed at the moment that he must have killed himself; and though his having gone out of sight had certainly created some hope within them, yet their anxiety was such when she left them as certainly to prepare them greatly for the fatal news.

"It is your duty to seek her, see her, and soothe her," said old Juno, turning from the grave around which this consultation had been held,—“but it is not mine. My duty lies elsewhere, and is of another kind. Farewell!—farewell to all. Phebe, my poor girl, little Sally will never be to me what you have been; but when I feel inclined to fret for you, I will remember that it was I who redeemed you from the land of slaves,—and that will comfort me. Cæsar, love her well, for she deserves it. Farewell to all!”

She gave a parting wave with her faithful bamboo, that might have been counted mystical still, so much of sorrow and affection did she contrive to make it speak, and then walked off towards her home.

The others proceeded directly to Clio's store. There was no longer any necessity for caution or concealment; the villanous agents of a villanous band had done their worst and would not molest them any farther.

During the interval the events of which have been just narrated, Clio, under pretence of seeking some article she wanted, contrived to carry refreshment to the loft; and great was her surprise at finding that two of the number she had left there had departed. In answer to the eager inquiries of their torturing anxiety, all she could tell them was, that the house of Reichland was burnt to the ground, and that the mob, or at least the greater part of them, had certainly retreated; but that no one as yet had thought it prudent to approach the premises, lest some ruffians might be lingering there.

"The greatest difficulty in releasing the ladies from the shelter so kindly afforded them, was to discover how to do it without betraying Clio, who confessed that she should be "put out more than enough, if sister Whitlaw found out what she had been after doing and no leave asked."

"I can tell you, Miss Clio," said Cæsar, and it was the first word he had spoken since his eyes last looked upon the face of Edward,—“I can tell you how madam can be made to see and hear nothing but what you please she should."

"That's a good nigger, then," replied Clio; "and what's your secret?"

"Jest let my new master and this young gentleman" (pointing to Baron Hochland)—"jest let them two pay madam a visit in her keep-ing-room, and she won't stir till they bids her."

"That's no bad invention," said Clio, smiling. "I expect you know the Missas, young man."

"But if I make this visit, who is it will tell Lucy?—I meant to have taken that painful duty myself."

"Father!" said Karl in a whisper, "I will do it."

It is surprising how much information may sometimes be derived from an accent. Frederick Steinmark learned as much from this whisper as if Karl had added to the words he spoke—"because I love her, father!"

"Do so, my dear son," he replied; and the reply was also in an accent that said much. And the party separated according to the suggestion of Cæsar. A passing slave was ordered to announce the visit of the two gentlemen to Mrs. Whitlaw; and as soon as they were admitted, Clio preceded the others to the door of the warehouse, which she unlocked, and left them.

The first glimpse of the faces which they had waited for so many hours in vain was hailed by a fervent exclamation of "Thank God!" from all. Hermann and Henrich walked straight to their mother and embraced her; while Karl, the heavy-laden Karl, approached slowly to Lucy, and, without daring to meet her eye, stretched out his hand to her in silence.

She received it not;—her eye glanced farther on, and, just at the entrance, having not wholly quitted the stair by which they had mounted, stood Phebe and Cæsar. Silent and motionless, like statues cast in bronze, they stood, as if to tell in action the tale they dared not speak. It was enough,—Karl's dreadful embassy was needless;—"Edward! oh, my Edward!" cried the desolate girl, "have I lost him for ever, Phebe?"

Thus called upon, the weeping Phebe flew to the side of her former mistress, and kneeling down, wrapped her arms round her, while, remembering with equal affection and good sense the words of Juno, she replied, "You have, my dearest mistress!—It has pleased God to take him. And oh, Miss Lucy! if he can look down from heaven, will it not be his best joy to see that you remember his lessons?—Say, His will be done!—say so, Miss Lucy, for his dear sake you have lost!"

"His will be done!" cried Lucy, dropping on her knees beside her humble friend.—But—oh, God! forgive me! I am very, very wretched!"

Mary and Lotte were now beside her: caresses, and tears more soothing still, told the poor girl that bitter as was her trial, the God on whom her lost Edward had taught her to repose her faith had not left

her desolate. Karl had stepped back when he found that the words he had so carefully prepared were unnecessary ; but he stood at no great distance, with his tearful eyes fixed on the group before him.

Lucy knew and felt he was near her ; but, by a strange mixture and confusion of feelings, the more comfort she felt in knowing this, the less she could bear to see and notice him. Sorrow and Edward filled her heart, and she was jealous lest any thought should enter to share it.

Happily for her, and for the friends whom Heaven had given her in her hour of need, they were called upon by imperious and most fortunate necessity to exert themselves.

The young man explained how they were obliged for the good Clio's sake to leave their present shelter instantly. On hearing this, they hastened to descend ; and when Clio had once more locked her warehouse, she ventured to ask them all to be seated in brother Whitlaw's smoking-bower, and then sent to the keeping-room to inform Mr. Steinmark that some ladies wanted him.

Mrs. Whitlaw, all civility and smiles, accompanied the two gentlemen into the garden. Her presence seemed to be an almost intolerable restraint ; but it might perhaps have been a blessing also, for when Frederick Steinmark approached Lucy with his heart swelling and a tear trembling in his eye, she only pressed in silence the hand he extended to her, and that exchange of feeling which if unchecked would have very painfully agitated both, was spared.

Mr. Steinmark had already accounted for his unwonted visit to Mrs. Whitlaw, by informing her that a riotous mob from Natchez having destroyed his house, he should be obliged if she would afford hospitality to him and his family while his servant prepared the waggon that was to convey them away.

As by good luck old Whitlaw had this day passed even more than his usual number of hours at the Eagle, the lady of Mount Etna was able to indulge her elegant predilection for good company by assuring Mr. Steinmark and the young "*Lord*," that "they were welcome to stay just as long as they liked."

Nothing now, therefore, remained but to prepare Lucy for the necessity of immediate departure, by telling her that the remains of her brother had already been interred by the hands of true and faithful friends. Frederick Steinmark even ventured to name the spot where he was left to his holy rest, and he showed his nice knowledge of a woman's heart by doing so.

"Does he lie there?—in my dear Lotte's garden?" said Lucy, melting into tears of softer sorrow than she had yet shed. "God bless you, sir?—God for ever bless you!"

Cæsar had been once more despatched to bring the waggon and

horses which through the long hours of that dreadful day had remained nearly where they had been first stationed to receive the family and their packages on the lawn.

The poor animals got a hasty feed of Mr. Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw's scorched corn, and were then led down to Mount Etna. Not a word had yet been said respecting the place of their destination. Had they departed in the morning, it would have been for Natchez; and the family, if they thought about it at all, imagined that it must be Natchez still. But when Cæsar returned, he begged, while the ladies with streaming eyes were once more taking their seats in the carriage, to speak a word in private to his master.

"I have been thinking, sir," he said with great humility, "that it will not be well for you to go to Natchez;—not that there will be danger, but news is sure to run, and many curious eyes may follow you to the wharf; and who knows, sir, but Miss Lucy might hear something said?"

"Enough! enough! Cæsar—we will not go to Natchez. How far is it, do you know, to the next place above at which the boats will stop!"

Cæsar knew but little about it, but Clio found a Mount Etna slave who did; and it was at length decided that they should immediately set out, and travel up the river till they reached it. All then that was now left to do ere quitting the region of their American home for ever, was to bid a long adieu to Clio; and spite of the wide difference in education, habits, feelings, tastes, it was most truly affectionate, and to the end of Clio's long life there was no recollection that gave so much pleasure as that of having sheltered Lotte Steinmark and her family.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE dreadful scene which old Juno witnessed at Reichland, far from accelerating the weakness and infirmities of age, which now at length seemed rapidly falling on her, appeared to awaken and revive a great portion of her former energy. Not all her reverence for the character of Edward had taught her to be practically so much a Christian as to understand the doctrine of forgiveness of injuries.

The hatred she had conceived for young Whitlaw, which originated in his barbarous abuse of the power given him over the slaves of Colonel Dart, had gone on increasing with almost every passing day; for in truth every passing day had added to the list of crimes her memory

stored up against him. His conduct to Selina—HER SELINA, had swelled this catalogue to an extent that made her believe she was called upon by Heaven to be the instrument of ridding the earth of such a monster. It was, therefore, with no view to corrupt the principles of Edward's Christian congregation that she had urged them to destroy him. In her heart she believed it would be a deed acceptable in the sight of God, and her disappointment brought no conviction to her mind that it was possible the humble people might be right, and herself wrong; she only thought it was another proof of the ill luck that dogged her destiny.

"I have shown them," she cried, "that the life of their apostle hangs upon the destruction of this villain, and yet the besotted fools think it their duty to preserve his life. This is not natural. Such reasoning is not in the common course of things, but comes from my evil hap." And never perhaps had the long-suffering old woman bewailed the rugged fortune that had followed her more bitterly than when she failed in this attempt. Never had she felt the utter worthlessness of herself and her existence so painfully, as when she wandered out into the forest on the morning of that eventful day, the miseries of which have been just recorded. She might have bemoaned in the language of Sampson, her

—— hopes all flat,
 —— Nature within her seemed
 In all her functions weary of herself.

But the deed she had seen perpetrated by those whom she knew to be the agents of the being she abhorred, instead of adding to the weight of grief and horror that rested on her, once more revived her hope of living to avenge Selina's death.

Instead of neglecting her health and strength as she had done since her return from New Orleans, she now did her very best to cherish both. She returned to her hut with the steady pace of one who would spare himself fatigue. The best and most cheering of her stores were drawn upon for her supper, and she went to bed praying to God for sleep, that her strength might be renewed, and that she might at last achieve the deed she was appointed to perform.

It may be mentioned as a proof of the care she took to save those powers of mind and body she was about to draw upon, that though it was necessary for her again to visit those with whom she had always been accustomed to hold intercourse during the night, she now determined to watch for an opportunity of speaking to them by day, lest a midnight vigil and a midnight walk might do her harm.

It would be only retracing the same ground that has been gone over before, were Juno's second round of visits to her Christian friends to be described. Again she urged them to come forward like men and avenge

the cause of the whole negro race, in destroying the most systematic and brutal enemy they had ever known; and to this plea for vengeance she now added, with all the anticipated triumph of assured success, the history of Edward Bligh's atrocious murder. But it was still in vain: the male portion of poor Edward's congregation was very small, and the few sober-minded men of whom it was composed were in no danger of having their principles destroyed by the sophistry of Juno.

But the purpose of her soul was too strongly fixed for this second failure to set it aside. She had already made up her mind what course to pursue should the friends of Edward again fail her, and it was only from a strange idea of doing his spirit pleasure that she endeavoured to avenge his death by the hands of his own people. These had shrunk from the good work, and she turned to agents of stronger fabric and less tender conscience.

Among the five hundred slaves of Paradise Plantation, there were not wanting some who had heavy cause to execrate the name of Whirlaw, and among whom, as Juno well knew, his recent accession to the situation of their actual legal master had been celebrated the night after it happened—when she had shut herself up in splanetic despair within her hut—by a chorus of muttered curses.

With her view of the nature of the deed which it was the only remaining object of her life to accomplish—believing it, as she truly did, to be just and holy, she would far rather have entrusted its execution to those who had been the disciples and followers of the martyr than to such as had never attended his ministry. But having failed in this, she once more set forth, after the hours of work were over; and now directing her steps, not exactly to the most holy, but the most wronged and the most vindictive, she soon found herself in the command, if she wished it, of a force sufficient in strength of purpose and in strength of hand to have executed the welcome task she proposed to them a hundred times over.

Having thus succeeded to her heart's desire in this part of her task, Juno, cheered in spirits and perfectly composed in mind, made a quiet friendly visit to Peggy.

She found her sitting alone in the covered space between her wash-house and her sleeping-room, and weeping sadly enough, though not bitterly, for the departure of her happy "glorious" Phebe. Of all the people in the world, Juno was the one whose conversation at this moment was likely to be the most welcome to her. It was she who had obtained this glorious lot for her child; it was she who had seen the last of her before her departure; and it was she who could best relate the horrors of the dreadful day at Reichland, of which rumours had reached the slaves, but of which they as yet knew nothing certainly.

After this tranquil friendly visit was over, Juno repaired to her home and passed a night of almost unbroken rest.

The following morning, just at the hour when she should be sure to find her new master enjoying the luxuries of his almost *al fresco* breakfast, the old slave repaired to the mansion-house of Paradise Plantation.

With her accustomed licensed boldness, she presented herself in the portico before the windows of his breakfast-room; and there, as she expected, sat the great and happy man. His table was spread with luxury so abundant, that it was evident that the pleasures of eating were not with him addressed to the palate alone, but that the eyes and nose were expected to take a share in it.

So many accidental circumstances had linked Juno in his memory with the most happy moments of his fortunate career, that Whitlaw was fully persuaded she had influenced them. Had Clio, who as he knew would joyfully have shed her blood to do him service, thus suddenly appeared before him, it was not in his nature to greet her with as much observance and respect as he now did Juno.—Juno, who, though he knew it not, thirsted for his life as greedily as a famished wolf for the daintiest morsel ever smelt in his ravenous dreams, and who in his soul he believed to be, though friendly for her hellish purposes to him—as foul a witch as ever distilled adders “caught in the eclipse”—Juno was welcomed by him with a gracious smile, and with hospitable offers of whatever she might prefer from his variously-spread table.

“Rum!” replied Juno, brandishing her bamboo with all her pristine mysticism of gesticulation. “Master of all!—rum can add power to will——”

With his own hand he presented her the glass, which she emptied, after pronouncing in a tone of great sublimity,

“Health to the master of all!—such health as follows the gifted prayers of Juno!”

Whitlaw as he listened to her seemed to feel the comfort of youth, health, and vigour in every limb; and again he smiled upon her gratefully.

“And what brings you to me to-day, Juno?” said he, making her a sign to seat herself as before in the portico. “I’ll engage now, that you are come to give me some profitable counsel,—or to tell me something, maybe, that I ought to know.”

“I shall begin to think my master has learnt his poor slave’s trade,” replied Juno with a grim smile. “Have the green birds told you that?”

“Not exactly the green birds, Juno, for they never talk to me but by your help. However, I have known you for a spell, Juno; and that is enough to help a shrewd man to make a shrewd guess.”

"Right, right, right,—a shrewd man you are, master of all ! and there's the secret that binds old Juno to love you as she does. Those who consult the spirits of the air love shrewdness such as yours ; it helps them famously."

"Well, then, I have guessed right, have I ?—What is it, Juno ? no mutiny among the slaves, I hope ?"

"While Juno lives," replied the old woman, nodding her head significantly,—“While Juno lives—and God may do what God has done—and the years of Juno may pass the years of man—and her thread of life may still be spun on, and on, as long as yours, master of all,—and while old Juno lives, no mutiny shall rise among the slaves but you shall know of it by times.”

"That's well, Juno—and you shall be paid for it."

"I shall, I shall—my heart will pay me, you may trust to that. And now, what have I got to tell you ?"

Here Juno rose up from her seat, and fixing her eyes upon his face, she entered the room and walked close up to him. Then in a whisper, that could not have been heard at three steps distance, she said,

"I cannot tell you now, I cannot tell you here ;—but I *will* tell you ; and when I do, then you will know how much you owe to Juno ?"

"But when can you, Juno ? I'm sure I'll go any where rather than disoblige you.—I expect you are thinking we may be overheard here?" he continued in a whisper as low as her own. "D'ye know of any listeners among 'em ?—any ill blood in the house, Juno ?"

"It is better that you should hear all I have got to say when I may speak and not care who hears me. Will the master of all come to Juno's poor hut before the slaves are driven forth to their work to-morrow morning ?"

"That's d——tion early, Juno," replied the great man. "When I wasn't the owner myself, you know, 'twas another guess sort of thing ;—and then I was early and late too sometimes. But now, you see, I like to indulge a spell when I wake :—'tis the best part of lying a-bed, I expect, when one's eyes are open, and one knows for certain that one is there, and as snug as feathers and fine linen can make one.—Can't I come later in the day, Juno ?"

"The master of all can come when he will, and go when he will, and do what he will ; but woe will come to the master, and woe will come to the slave in this matter, if his steps are seen drawing near to the dwelling of Juno."

"But the best way not to be seen would be for me to come jest in full working-time. The overseers will take care that no slaves are straggling then ; and I need not even cross the fields, you know, for

I can ride round into the woods, and so come to you from behind the hut."

"That is true," replied Juno; "and if you come at that time, midnight and darkness could not more surely keep the eyes of slaves from you.—But have none eyes save slaves?—How many others are there, who may be here, or there, according to their will, and none have power to stop them?"

"Not slaves!—Good God!—do you fear the overseers, Juno?—I'll come without fail, jest before sun-rise.—But say one word,—do you suspect my overseers?"

"One is not all—and even two are not many. But fear not for any of them!—Come five minutes before sun-rise, and you shall be told all,—to the last word,—that it is necessary for you to hear."

"Take this glass of rum, Juno," said Whitlaw in a tone that spoke both gratitude and triumph. "The rascals!—if they are niggers, I know how to deal with 'em; and if they are whites, there's more Lynch-law to be had for the asking."

Juno, nothing loath, took the glass, and holding it to her lips, said, "May your coming to poor Juno but keep you as safe from every future harm as she would have you, and you never shall have cause to fear treachery more!"

She then emptied the glass, waved her farewell, and departed.

CHAPTER LIV.

It will hardly be doubted that considerably before the sun was visible above the horizon, on the following morning, old Juno was up and ready to receive her expected visitor. But not the slightest trace of hurry or agitation was perceptible in her countenance or manner, and not for many years had she appeared so perfectly exempted from weakness or suffering of any kind.

She walked forth from her hut and turned her eyes towards the east. The short twilight was rapidly brightening into day, when the sound of a horse's feet behind her dwelling made her start. She forgot that he was one of those who professed never to walk when he could ride, and for a moment she feared that their interview was interrupted; but at the same instant she turned her head and beheld Whitlaw.

"The wise and shrewd are always punctual," observed Juno, making a respectful reverence. "Will it please the master of all to

seat himself on this log?—The air is fresh and pleasant here, and it may be that the hut of Juno is not roomy enough.”

“It don’t matter much, I expect,” replied Whittlaw, “as to where we bide while you says out your say, Juno. Tell me at once, my good woman, what danger is it that threatens?”

“I will answer all your questions, as in duty bound,” replied Juno, placing herself before him; “but first the business that brought you here makes it right and fitting that you should answer some few of mine. I would not willingly mistake or blunder in such a thing as this, and I should like to have your own voice upon it.”

“Well, then, begin, in God’s name—and be quick, will you?—I hate being out in the damp of the morning; I don’t want to shake, I promise you.”

“If you should shake, Mr. Whittlaw, the fit will not hold you long: I know a cure for ague.”

“But these questions, Juno,—what is it that you want to ask of me?”

“Will you promise to answer all I ask?”

“To be sure—why not?—come, ask away.”

“Have you ever caused a negro child to be flogged before the eyes of Colonel Dart SOLELY to promote his amusement by its gestures and its cries?”

“What the devil can any overseer have to do with that?” said Whittlaw, colouring.

“You shall understand the meaning of all presently. Did you ever cause a negro—woman to be flogged before your eyes till she died, and then report to the colonel that she had died in childbirth?”

“’Tis over late for ’em to do any mischief to me on that score,” said Jonathan Jefferson with a toss of the head. “If I *did*, I expect I killed my own slave at any rate;—the loss is mine, and not the overseer’s, let him be who he will.”

“Did you, or did you not,” continued Juno, “report falsely to the colonel what his nephew said of him, thereby securing his inheritance to yourself?”

“And I should like to see the overseer that would fault that!—I tell you what, old lady, I don’t altogether approbate this style of talking to me, and I don’t see which way it’s to turn to my profit;—so quit, if you please, and come to the point at once.”

“Be not so hasty with your good friend, Juno,” said she; “I have very nearly done, for I find not that your answers throw much new light upon the matter:—I’ll ask but one question more;—Did Selina Croft and did Edward Bligh owe their early deaths to you?—Monster!—they did!—” exclaimed the old woman, raising her voice to the highest pitch; “monster, they did!—and thou shalt pay for

it, if thy craven blood is the last that ever sinks into the earth for vengeance!"

Whitlaw turned pale as death. He looked wildly round him; but perceiving only the withered hag who, trembling with impotent fury, uttered these revilings with the look and voice of a maniac, he roused himself from the terror that had seized upon him, and hastily turned towards the spot where he had left his horse. But as he did so, the idea occurred to him that this old woman, mad as he now believed her, might do him great injury by repeating the tales too plainly stamped upon her disordered mind, and glancing his eye at the same instant over her shaking and diminutive form, he darted towards her with extended hands, exclaiming, "Accursed hag!—but I will stop thy breath first!"

Ere he reached her, Juno raised her bamboo to her mouth and drew from it a loud shrill whistle. Whitlaw at once felt that he was lost. As a last desperate effort, however, he sprang towards his horse, and had nearly caught the rein, when the bushes beside him suddenly seemed to live, and four powerful negroes rushed upon him, who in an instant bore him to the ground. Every arm in that unequal conflict was braced by the consciousness of some well-remembered wrong, and many was the heavy stroke and desperate stab given, rather to afford vent to the long-smothered hatred of the avengers than to ensure the death of their victim; for Whitlaw had breathed his last long before the assassins had ceased to strike.

The ghastly spectacle wrought no change in the feelings of Juno. She steadily watched the death-agony, and then raising her eyes to heaven, exclaimed, "Selina!—my own Selina!—Edward!—saint and martyr of our wretched race!—old Juno has avenged ye!"

Then turning to the executioners, she said, "Let not the blood stain the ground farther than needs must.—For me it matters not; but for your sakes, good fellows, it is needful that this righteous deed be hid.—Stay!" she added; "wait for me a moment."

She entered her hut, and presently returned with a bundle of rags. "There—now bind him up. I have a vault ready for him. It was my child he killed, and it was my hands that hollowed out his grave. So, so, do the work steadily and well—there's no hurry yet. You shall bury him where, if you keep your own secret, mortal man will never be likely to find him; and you will have no more to fear than if you'd killed a buzzard and left it rotting in a ditch."

She then again retreated to the hut, while the men in the best manner they could obeyed her orders; and having remained there for a few minutes, returned again, saying, "Now lift him up and follow me. The tomb is ready."

The four men raised their common foe between them and bore him

into the hut, where, to their surprise, yawned what seemed a deep and ample grave. Not a word was spoken by either of them; but as Juno with her own hand fastened down the trap-door that covered him, she said, "There lie, and rest from thy sins! I may have spared thee many.—Could I shut in his evil spirit here," she said, turning to the men, "as I have done his hateful carcass, I should be a better friend than the mother that bore him. But that, poor wretch, is better luck than he can hope for—he'll fare worse elsewhere than we have used him here."

All traces of this terrible deed were soon effaced: the four slaves, their hands and faces washed in the nearest brook, were ready to obey the overseer's call, and went with their comrades to their daily work safe and unchallenged. The bedstead of old Juno was left standing in its usual corner; but her mattress and her blankets, and herself, were all removed before night to the dwelling of Peggy, where she was readily permitted to install herself; for heavy as was the loss her patronage brought with it, the grateful mother could never forget how much her Phebe owed her.

It was just two days afterwards that the old woman, who, let who might be her master, be it any one or no one, still rambled where she would, contrived to find herself upon the wharf at Natchez just as a fine steam-boat coming down the river, drew near it, to leave and receive passengers and to take in wood.

No sooner had she stopped than, as usual, a full stream made up of crew and passengers poured out of her upon the shore. Juno waited patiently till this rush was over, and then by the help of her bamboo got safely on board. She knew the geography of a steam-boat as well as that of Paradise Plantation, and presently found herself just where she wished to be; namely, in the presence of Cæsar and his Phebe.

An exclamation of joyful surprise broke from the young couple, which was answered by a friendly nod; and then came the question, for the purpose of asking which she was there: "How is she, Phebe?—how does she bear up?"

"Better, better, dear Juno!—better than you could hope. And must it not be Providence, Juno, that has put her where she is? She could not have the heart to go on fretting her dear life away with such kind creatures standing by to watch her. And that's why she's better. She thinks it right not to sink down before it, and so she will not sink. I know her better than anybody else can know her now. But that won't be for long, for there's not one of them all, except it is young Master Sigismond, whose head is full of our Miss Lotte, that seems from morning to night to think of any earthly thing but her."

"Yes!" said Juno musingly, "it is the will of God. His will,

Phebe, is sometimes shown where it is hard to trace it. But where goodness is plainly seen—goodness, all-blessing goodness,—then, Phebe, we know that it has pleased the Almighty to unveil his work, and we no longer see him darkly.”

Phebe listened with reverence to words of which she felt the truth at her heart. Then followed some talk of Peggy and her little ones; and it was with great satisfaction that the poor girl heard of Juno's new arrangement. “It is so right for all of you!” said she; “who is there can talk of me to mother like you, Juno?—and who knows so well as mother how to make the cakes just as you like them?”

Their conversation was interrupted by Caesar, who having shown his face at the door of the great cabin, and announced to Hermann, who stood near it, that old Juno was aboard, had been immediately commissioned by the whole Steinmark party to invite her to come and speak to them upon the gallery. She obeyed, but her eye only sought out Lucy. The mourning girl saw this, and notwithstanding her earnest effort to prevent it, the tears would come.

“Forgive me!” said Juno with more real humility than she was in the habit of feeling before any one; “but to look at you once more—to see you look, Miss Lucy, as if you would live to reward those who love you—it was for this I came: will you forgive me?”

“Indeed, Juno,” replied Lucy, “I thank you for your love;—and tell poor Peggy that I am better than she or I either would have believed possible: and tell her, too, that Phebe will be a very happy girl, —for those who have no feelings in the world but goodness have the care of her.”

This was Lucy Bligh's last farewell to those of her native land. Old Juno received the cordial good wishes of all the party. As they watched her retreat from the boat to the wharf, the paddles began to play, and in another five minutes they had lost sight of Natchez and its green bluff for ever.

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A very few words may suffice to trace the most important events that have since befallen the persons with whom the reader has become acquainted in the course of the foregoing pages.

The wishes of the Steinmark family seemed to have power to fill their sails, for swift and prosperous was the voyage that carried them to the port of Hamburg. The entire novelty of the scene, and of all the external circumstances in which she was placed—together with the tender, watchful affection of the family who had become the whole world to her, joined to the sincere and really Christian efforts of her own mind, had all done much for Lucy. The image of Edward was as deeply impressed and as fondly cherished as ever; but it was no

longer the only one, and before the beautiful new country, with all its rousing interests of history and romance, which was to be traversed in the way to Westphalia was passed over, Lucy scrupled not to confess to her heart that life might still have happy hours in store for her.

The reunion of the long-parted brothers was a spectacle that no one could contemplate without feeling that it was a blessing to be near them. A patriarchal circle soon filled the ample castle of the good Westphalian baron; and that Lotte had a castle of her own, and therefore could not always and for ever make part of it, seemed to be the only defect he found in the arrangement. But, like every other member of the family, he soon learned to think that though it might have been better to possess them both, yet that Lucy could supply her place better than any other fair specimen of womankind in the whole world; and if, in the division of his great wealth, his nephew Karl appeared the favourite, it was pretty generally understood that this arose from the great probability there appeared to be, that, through his means, his favourite Lucy Bligh would speedily become his niece.

The ultimate fate of Clio was as unexpected as it was singular, and must not be forgotten. Whether it were that the unfortunate Jonathan Jefferson Whittlaw, in the new and intoxicating delight of finding himself unexpectedly a man of enormous wealth, felt disposed from the very first hour to use all the power and privilege it gave him, or whether some strange and unconscious prescience of his coming fate led him to prepare for it, certain it is that within twenty-four hours of his having received the deed which endowed him with Colonel Dart's great possessions, he composed and signed another, duly witnessed and executed, wherein, without mentioning the name of any other living being, he bequeathed it all, as well as everything else he might die possessed of, to Clio Whittlaw, spinster, his dear and well-beloved aunt.

For several days, the unaccountable absence of the new proprietor from his home and his estates did not create any very general surprise. His father thought that he was treating himself with "a go" at the gaming-table; his mother-in-law, that it was likely enough he had fallen in love, and was gone to bring home a lady to surprise them; while his unconscious heiress fancied, when she remembered, as she was very apt to do, the days of Mohanna Creek, that he was only treating himself with a little pleasure on board a steam-boat.

When weeks and months, however, had worn away, and he was no more seen or heard of, Jonathan Whittlaw senior began to think that it might be as well to look over his papers, to ascertain if possible if he had any affairs likely to take him to a distance.

This examination brought to light the will; and legal opinions ap-

pearing in favour of its being at once examined, from the possibility that it might throw some information upon his mysterious disappearance, it was done, and the wonderful discovery made, that if indeed he were dead, "Clio Whitlaw, what always served in the store at Mount Etna, was the richest heiress in Louisiana."

The very existence of the will itself, made so immediately after he had the power to do it, persuaded many to believe that he must have had some reason to know that he should not live long; but nothing in the world could induce Clio to believe in his death. She immediately showed more wisdom, and even knowledge, than the generality of people gave her credit for, by the manner in which she arranged everything, and took care that all should be prosperous, safe, and in readiness against her Jonathan returned; but as to appropriating one cent of the rich inheritance to herself, she would not hear of it.

The last act of old Juno's life was to settle this knotty point for the good Clio. Having contrived to converse with her on the subject, and finding in truth that it was probable she would live and die without benefiting by what it was likely she would make a blessing to many, Juno took care that the bones of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw, clad in the dress he was known to have been in the habit of wearing, and moreover with sundry identifying letters and papers in his pocket, should be found at no great distance from his mansion. That he should have been murdered appeared to create but little surprise in any one—his notorious cruelty and tyranny rendered the event extremely natural; to poor Clio her wealth came stained by tears.

Time, however, softens every human sorrow, and Clio is now living on one of the finest estates in Louisiana, as happy as the sharing kindness and munificence to all the world can and must make a heart as generous as hers.

It was one among many proofs of thoughtful attention on the part of the Steinmarks towards Lucy, that from the time they arrived at their home, Phebe was appointed to be her especial servant; and it was that reason probably, among some others, which made both Mr. and Mrs. Cæsar Bush declare, that "if heaven was for all the good a happier place than Germany was for niggers, it must be an unaccountable fine place, indeed."

After seven years of faithful service in the Steinmark family, Cæsar and his wife contrived to realise a sum sufficient to purchase the freedom of Peggy, who was at an age that made the sum a small one; and *Madame Karl Steinmark, nee Bligh*, furnished what was necessary for the expenses of her voyage. Her two younger children were already wives and mothers under the gentle sway of "Miss Clio Whitlaw;" and it was, therefore, with almost unmixed pleasure that the

good woman joined her darling Phebe, and was installed as laundress-in-chief of the baron's noble castle.

Frederick Steinmark and his Mary, though they had never through the tedious course of their long exile exchanged a murmur at their lot, now confessed, as they saw the circle of happy faces around them, that Europe was the soil for Europeans, and that there was some comfort in living in a land in which, let a man sing what he will about "home," there is no danger that on looking round they should see tears standing in every eye.

THE END.

